



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



THURSDAY — 18 Nov 2021

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Events, Opportunities

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 WSP chief: diversifying workforce difficult |
| SOURCE | https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/washington-state-patrol-wsp-struggles-to-recruit-diverse-employees/281-ddd3579f-f095-4722-83bf-42909975a883 |
| GIST | <p>OLYMPIA, Wash. — Washington State Patrol Chief John Batiste has heard the criticism his agency is too white and too male.</p> <p>While he said diversifying the Washington State Patrol (WSP) is a priority of his, he told lawmakers Wednesday it is a challenge.</p> <p>According to WSP, 86.5 percent of commissioned troopers are white and 90 percent are male.</p> <p>Following a consultant's report calling for more emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion, the office created an office and website on diversity, recruiting campaigns are targeted at minority communities, and WSP has a goal to have 30 percent of the agency made up of female employees by 2030.</p> <p>Those changes and goals were not enough to keep lawmakers from asking Batiste what else the agency has planned.</p> <p>"Do you have a definite date for when you'd like to increase the number of African Americans or other people of color?" asked Rep. Debra Entenman (D-Covington).</p> <p>Rep. Jamila Taylor (D-Federal Way) said past attempts at diversification within WSP produced "dismal results."</p> <p>State Representative John Lovick (D-Snohomish County,) a former WSP Trooper, asked Batiste, "Can you tell me why you haven't been able to make the WSP more appealing to a more diverse set of candidates?"</p> <p>"I wish I had an easy answer," said Batiste, who added he and his staff are working "very, very hard at this."</p> <p>"This is a profession in particular over the course of the last many years that has struggled with regards to community acceptance to some degree as a profession, which has made it a lot more difficult to recruit folks within the diverse communities," said Batiste.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Airport parking shortage impact travelers |
| SOURCE | https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/airport-parking-shortage-will-impact-holiday-travelers/3DACE7WHQVDHZMHU7K5J4SO3Y/ |
| GIST | <p>KING COUNTY, Wash. — A parking crunch will bring new headaches for holiday travelers this year at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.</p> <p>Airport officials say the number of available spaces in and around the airport is down by 3,800 stalls, or 12 percent.</p> <p>"The parking in our garage this season is going to be extremely busy. We pretty much have what we could consider the perfect storm," said Lance Lyttle, managing director at SEA.</p> <p>A couple of hundred spaces in the airport garage are closed for construction.</p> <p>In addition, passengers now compete for spots in the garage with as many as 1,500 workers because there's a shortage of shuttle bus drivers to take them to an employee lot.</p> |

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| | <p>Many spots are full even on the roof of the garage, and some drivers are parking in undesignated places.</p> <p>Airport officials say another 2,100 spots at private lots near the airport are gone because the lots closed during the pandemic.</p> <p>Operators of open lots are trying to find more workers, and some passengers report waiting longer for shuttle buses.</p> <p>Airport officials held a news event on Wednesday, urging people to take light rail to catch their flights.</p> <p>“Riders boarding at Northgate are breezing past traffic jams on I-5 and reaching Sea-Tac in 49 minutes,” said Kent Keel, board chair at Sound Transit. “You’re not going to have to guess what time you’re going to arrive because of traffic.”</p> <p>SEA predicts 1.5 million passengers will travel through the airport between Nov. 18 and Nov. 29.</p> <p>That’s 150 percent more travelers than the same period last year, but still below pre-pandemic levels in 2019.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 DOJ grants to hire 1,000 new police officers |
| SOURCE | https://komonews.com/news/nation-world/justice-dept-grant-awards-139m-to-hire-1000-new-officers |
| GIST | <p>WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department is giving \$139 million to police departments across the U.S. as part of a grant program that would bring on more than 1,000 new officers.</p> <p>The grant funding being announced Thursday through the Justice Department's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services will be awarded to 183 law enforcement agencies across the country and in U.S. territories. The funding is meant to help police departments reduce crime and to encourage community policing.</p> <p>The grant awards come as police departments across the U.S. have been facing budget reductions, with cities struggling with ballooning costs from the coronavirus pandemic and national calls to reduce police funding in favor of spending more money on social services. Several police agencies have also delayed or canceled police academy classes, which is likely to leave a number of jobs unfilled as other officers retire.</p> <p>Law enforcement agencies across the country experienced a wave of retirements and departures and are struggling to recruit the next generation of police officers since George Floyd was killed at the hands of police officers in Minneapolis in May 2020, sparking massive protests about policing and inequity across the country. And amid the national reckoning on policing, communities have been questioning who should become a police officer today.</p> <p>The Justice Department said it received nearly 600 applications from police departments in nearly every state and U.S. territory. The grant requires that the money be used to hire additional officers, other than those who would normally be hired using a police department's operating budget.</p> <p>The money is given directly to police and sheriff's departments to hire the new law enforcement officers. The Justice Department says half of the agencies plan to use the money "to focus on building legitimacy and trust between law enforcement and communities," while others will use it to build mental health programs or focus on violent crime — a Justice Department priority.</p> <p>The money was being provided to police departments both large and small. For example, the grant provides funds for an additional 50 officers in San Francisco, Chicago, Cincinnati and Houston. New Orleans, Cleveland and St. Paul, Minnesota, would receive 30 new officers, and other smaller forces receive a few new officers.</p> |

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| | <p>In total, the funding allots 1,066 new officers for a total cost of \$139,232,523, the Justice Department said.</p> <p>Besides funds for hiring, Justice Department policing grants also provide funding for local, state and tribal law enforcement agencies to enhance community policing, in which agencies use relationships with community leaders to establish dialogues about needs and identify residents' concerns.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Floods cut access to Lummi Nation |
| SOURCE | https://www.q13fox.com/news/lummi-nation-cut-off-by-floodwaters |
| GIST | <p>LUMMI NATION, Wash. - While some North Sound communities are squeezing out the last drops of historic floods, others are being instructed to shelter in place.</p> <p>The roadways in and out of Lummi Nation are closed due to floodwaters that are stranding families. Some have been told to be ready to evacuate.</p> <p>On Wednesday morning, tribal communications shared warnings on social media, citing Whatcom County public works declaring all roads in and out of the reservation were unsafe for travel. Lummi medical staff were ferried onto the reservation by tribal police as well.</p> <p>In Bellingham, some roads remained closed after flooding last Monday. Drone video posted online by the city showed kayakers floating above flooded streets. Other businesses not impacted by floods complained road closures deterred customers from visiting.</p> <p>Whatcom County public works confirmed floodwaters were to blame for closing access to Lummi Nation. Neighbors living beyond the roadblocks told FOX 13 News some families were being escorted into the reservation. Law enforcement could be seen manning a blockade on Haxton Way.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/18 Iraqis fly back home from Belarus |
| SOURCE | https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/more-migrants-try-enter-poland-belarus-east-west-standoff-2021-11-18/ |
| GIST | <p>BRUZGI, Belarus, Nov 18 (Reuters) - Hundreds of Iraqis who had camped for weeks at Belarus's freezing borders with the EU checked in for a flight back to Iraq on Thursday, the first such flight in months amid a stand-off between the West over Minsk over the fate of migrants.</p> <p>It was not immediately clear if the repatriation flight was a sign the crisis was easing, or just a temporary reprieve.</p> <p>European countries accuse Belarus of flying thousands of migrants in from the Middle East and pushing them to attempt to cross the frontier illegally. Belarus denies fomenting the crisis but says it can help resolve it only if the EU lifts sanctions it imposed after a crackdown on protests last year.</p> <p>In a cruel sign of the harsh conditions migrants face at the border, an aid group, the Polish Centre for International Aid, said an injured couple it found early on Thursday told them their one-year-old child had died in the forest.</p> <p>So far, it had been estimated that at least eight people had died at the border in recent months.</p> <p>Large numbers of Iraqis are among those who have camped at Belarus's borders, seeking entry and a better life in the prosperous 27-nation EU. Some 430, mostly Iraqi Kurds, checked in for a flight back to Iraq from Minsk on Thursday, the Iraqi foreign ministry said.</p> |

There had been no other such flights since about 1,000 Iraqis were evacuated from Minsk in August, a spokesperson for Iraqi Airways, Hussein Jalil, told Reuters.

"I would not go back (to Iraq) if it wasn't for my wife," a 30-year-old Iraqi Kurd, who declined to give his name, told Reuters a day ahead of the evacuation flight. "She does not want to go back with me to the border, because she saw too many horrors over there." The couple attempted to cross at least eight times from Belarus to Lithuania and Poland.

Meanwhile, Belarusian state airline Belavia has stopped allowing citizens from Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Syria and Yemen to board flights from Uzbekistan's Tashkent to Minsk, the Belta news agency cited the carrier as saying on Thursday.

The EU has launched a diplomatic effort to resolve the crisis by putting pressure on regional countries not to allow migrants to board flights for Belarus.

TRYING TO CROSS THE BORDER

While some migrants returned to Iraq, others, desperate to reach the EU, attempted to cross the heavily-guarded border.

Poland said the number of attempts to cross its border from Belarus had risen on Wednesday, with 501 attempts, including around 200 consisting of people who were detained after breaking through when a big group of around 500 made a push across.

In another incident, a few dozen people threw stones, injuring three soldiers and a police officer.

Around 200-300 people, mainly men but also families with young children, remained huddled around makeshift fires near the Kuznica-Bruzgi border point, a Reuters reporter on the Belarusian side of the frontier said.

Others had set up a few tents, and a man could be seen feeding a baby. They were surrounded by Belarusian soldiers wearing masks, helmets and vests, and a water cannon could be seen on the Polish side of the border.

There are about 1,000 people grouped in total near the Bruzgi border crossing, the border guard spokesperson said, adding that this was about half the previous number. Belarus TV showed footage of hundreds of migrants, including families, many sitting on mattresses, who had been moved to a large warehouse.

Foreign ministers from the G7 group of wealthy economies said Belarus was orchestrating the crisis.

"These callous acts are putting people's lives at risk," said the statement, issued on Thursday by G7 chair Britain. "We call on the regime to cease immediately its aggressive and exploitative campaign in order to prevent further deaths and suffering."

EU leaders have shunned Belarus's President Alexander Lukashenko since a crackdown on pro-democracy protesters after a disputed election last year. But they have begun reaching out directly to him as part of efforts to resolve the border crisis.

On Wednesday, German Chancellor Angela Merkel spoke to him for the second time this week. Her spokesman said she stressed the need to let the United Nations and European Commission provide aid to migrants. Belarus said the pair had come to "an understanding", agreeing that Belarus and EU officials would hold talks as soon as possible.

But the European Union's executive said there could be no negotiation with Belarus over the plight of the migrants, describing Merkel's phone calls with Lukashenko as just "bilateral contacts".

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| HEADLINE | 11/18 US, Canada border towns assess damage |
| SOURCE | https://apnews.com/article/floods-environment-and-nature-canada-washington-evacuations-cd245c1827c7e59ece6b9291730860d5 |
| GIST | <p>SUMAS, Wash. (AP) — Residents of this small U.S. city along the Canadian border were assessing damage from flooding that hit an estimated three quarters of homes, as Washington state and British Columbia tried to dry out from an intense, days-long rain storm that cut off key roadways and forced hundreds of evacuations.</p> <p>Skies were sunny Wednesday morning in the area around Sumas, Washington, where about 500 rescues and evacuations were reported.</p> <p>“We’re looking at going door-to-door, as waters go down in different parts of town,” Sumas Mayor Kevin Christensen told The Seattle Times. “Half is on dry ground, half has water.”</p> <p>By Wednesday afternoon, only one river in western Washington had active flood warnings.</p> <p>The soaking fueled by a so-called atmospheric river that dumped torrents rain on the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia from Saturday through Monday reminded people of western Washington’s record, severe flooding in November 1990 when two people died and there were more than 2,000 evacuations.</p> <p>While the weather was improving, the situation remained dire in British Columbia, where the Canadian government was sending in the military to help with floods and mudslides that destroyed parts of several major highways. One death was reported and officials said Wednesday that more deaths were expected.</p> <p>Immediately across the border from Sumas, police using helicopters and boats had evacuated about 180 residents of a flooded low-lying area of Abbotsford, British Columbia. Evacuations continued Wednesday.</p> <p>Mayor Henry Braun said Wednesday that conditions were bad overnight because a key pumping station was in danger of being overwhelmed. He said crews spent Tuesday night sandbagging around the station and things were “holding steady.”</p> <p>“I’m feeling much better today than last night,” Braun said, although he cautioned the danger had not passed.</p> <p>Those evacuated in Abbotsford joined thousands of others in the province who were forced from their homes by floods or landslides starting Sunday night.</p> <p>On Facebook, the City of Sumas said Wednesday that water levels were continuing to drop and it looked like the community wouldn’t be affected by additional potential flooding in Abbotsford. It said crews were working hard to clear roads and return power to some parts of town.</p> <p>“These families and businesses need our prayers and support as we start the process of cleanup and rebuilding over the next few days,” the city said in another Facebook post.</p> <p>To the south, a flood warning for Washington’s Skagit River will remain in effect until Thursday because it will take time for the floodwaters to drain, the National Weather Service said. Officials recommended that residents of several nearby islands evacuate.</p> <p>Across the border, the body of a woman was recovered from a landslide near the small community of Lillooet, British Columbia. Royal Canadian Mounted Police said at least two other people were reported missing.</p> |

British Columbia Premier John Horgan declared a state of emergency Wednesday following the unprecedented flooding.

In Washington's Whatcom County, home to Sumas, the county sheriff's office said on Facebook that authorities and search crews on Wednesday had located a body believed to be a 59-year-old man who had last been seen clinging to a tree after his truck was swept into a flooded field in the town of Everson.

In the city Ferndale, also southwest of Sumas, officials had urged people in homes and businesses Tuesday to evacuate near the rising Nooksack River and bystanders had rescued a man who had driven into floodwaters by mistake.

Evacuation notices were rescinded Wednesday and the flood warning had ended by Wednesday afternoon. Southwest of Ferndale, authorities said Wednesday that all routes off the Lummi Peninsula, home to the Lummi Nation, were closed because of water over the roads.

Officials in the city of Bellingham said only a few roads there remained closed on Wednesday because of flooding and officials were also assessing damage.

More rain fell in Bellingham from Saturday through Monday — about 5.57 inches (14.14 centimeters) — than normally falls there during all of November, according to National Weather Service data. The normal monthly rain total is 5.2 inches (13.2 centimeters) for November, the weather agency said.

Transportation officials on Washington's Olympic Peninsula — where the Coast Guard earlier in the week rescued 10 people stranded by floodwaters — on Wednesday were also assessing conditions and clearing debris from roads.

Officials said Wednesday that in the far northwest corner of the peninsula, people on the Makah Reservation have been prevented from leaving or entering because of landslides on nearby highways, The Seattle Times reported.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee on Monday declared a severe weather state of emergency in 14 counties. On a visit to Whatcom County Wednesday, he said some 500 homes had damage from the storms.

Inslee said he spoke with the mayors of Everson and Sumas and was astonished at the devastation he saw, The Bellingham Herald reported.

"I'm told they did top all-time flood levels in some places," he said.

Some of the floodwaters came after warmer rains quickly melted 4 feet of snow that previously fell in the Mount Baker wilderness. Inslee said Whatcom County should prepare for repeated floods and address the causes of climate change.

"We have to realize that we're going to face decades of increased floods in our state of Washington," he said.

Inslee promised to use state and federal money — including funds from President Joe Biden's recent infrastructure bill — to ease the effects of climate change.

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Frustration: shifting virus travel rules |
| SOURCE | https://www.msn.com/en-us/travel/news/shifting-coronavirus-testing-rules-leave-travelers-frustrated/ar-AAQPjUE |
| GIST | When it comes to coronavirus testing requirements and travel, rules are rules — except when they aren't. |

That's what Paul Marlow discovered before he flew from Vancouver, B.C., to Barcelona via Frankfurt, Germany, recently. Lufthansa emailed Marlow to notify him that he needed a negative PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test within 72 hours before his arrival to enter Spain. He paid \$160 for a test.

Marlow, who runs a [fashion website](#) in Vancouver, noticed that his middle initial was missing from his test results. When he called the testing center, a nurse told him he would need a second test, "which would put me more than \$300 in the hole before I even left my country," he said. He refused.

When Marlow arrived in Barcelona, he removed his middle-initial-less test results from his passport holder.

"No one asked to see my results," he says.

Confusion like Marlow's has become more common as testing and proof-of-vaccination requirements shift. The rules, often unevenly enforced, have left travelers frustrated.

"There's a lot of misinformation floating around right now about coronavirus testing," says Geoff Trenkle, co-founder of [Total Testing Solutions](#), a Los Angeles company that provides coronavirus testing. "That's unfortunate, because it is really pretty simple."

With only a handful of exceptions, you'll need a negative coronavirus test before leaving the country. And you'll have to get tested before you return, too. There are multiple types of tests, some more widely accepted than others. You'll also need to budget time and money for testing when you're making travel plans.

Does anyone bother checking your test results? I've heard from numerous travelers who, like Marlow, say no one reviewed their paperwork. Others tell me that they've been checked multiple times and that they've seen passengers without the required type of test results be turned away at the airport. Generally, the airline is responsible for checking your negative coronavirus test before you depart.

For information about types of tests, Trenkle recommends consulting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "[COVID-19 Testing Overview](#)" page. The gold standard of coronavirus tests and the most widely accepted one remains the RT-PCR (reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction). But Trenkle says RT-LAMP (reverse transcription loop-mediated isothermal amplification) tests are faster and can also be as accurate. Antigen tests are more readily available, but they don't always catch asymptomatic infections.

There are a few perennial questions about coronavirus testing and travel. For example, do you need a coronavirus test before you leave the United States? The default answer is yes. Some countries, including Colombia, the Dominican Republic and Mexico, don't require a negative test to enter. But elsewhere, you'll need to show your test results when you arrive, even if you're only in the country to make a connection.

The travel site [Kayak](#) has an easy-to-understand [world map that includes coronavirus testing requirements](#). [Borderless](#), a site published by travel insurance company SafetyWing, also identifies places where you can get a coronavirus PCR or antigen test fast enough to accommodate travel plans.

Want to book a test, too? You can find detailed information on Sameday Health's [website](#) with nearly every country's testing and vaccination requirements. Felix Huettenbach, co-founder and chief executive of Sameday Health, recommends making inquiries several days before your test results need to be ready. "Many providers may have longer wait times," he says.

How much should you pay? Ideally, a PCR or antigen test should cost nothing. But you may pay a price for a free test. I found two clinics in Long Beach, Calif., to do free PCR tests before my recent flight to Portugal. They promised results in 48 to 72 hours, but clinic workers said it should only take two days, at most. Portugal requires PCR tests be taken within 72 hours before entry. I also took a \$175 test through

Sameday Health that promised results within 12 hours. Travelers have reported an abundance of similar same-day testing options in their areas.

The free PCR tests didn't arrive on time; the Sameday test took about six hours.

Sometimes it takes a little digging to find accurate information. Stephen Morrissey, a retired advertising manager from Toronto, was dismayed when he calculated the testing fees for a multi-leg trip to the United Kingdom and Spain for himself and his wife. He initially figured that the coronavirus tests would set them back about \$1,400. But then he did more research and found that the United Kingdom doesn't require the expensive PCR test if you're fully vaccinated.

You do, however, have to take a coronavirus test after arriving in England, he says.

Rules can be inconsistently enforced when you return to the United States, too. Brad Sherp, an American who has lived in Costa Rica since spring, has taken coronavirus tests four times since the United States began requiring a negative test for returning passengers. He showed the test results to his airline, he said, but no one else asked to see his paperwork.

"I have reentered the U.S. in Miami, Houston and Dallas," he says. "None of them asked me to show them my coronavirus test."

But that's not always true, as Michael Goldrich discovered when he returned to the United States recently.

"It had to be the right timing," says Goldrich, who works for a hotel website in San Francisco. "It's very confusing, because sometimes it says two to three days, while other sites say 48 to 72 hours."

He paid about \$96 to get tested two days before his departure from Barcelona — a price he considers too high. "The results were checked multiple times," he recalls, noting that not everyone passed. One family booked on his flight had results that had expired, and they weren't allowed to fly.

Courtney Jackson understands the confusion. When it comes to testing and proof-of-vaccination requirements, she tends to repeat herself a lot. First, she tells her clients about the latest rules.

"I also update my clients as travel requirements change," says Jackson, whose agency, [Wishful Escapes](#), specializes in luxury travel. "Finally, before departure, I double-check the requirements again to make sure nothing has changed."

Even then, travel professionals such as Jackson can't be sure how the rules will be interpreted or enforced — or whether they will be observed at all.

Some travel agencies are helping clients with their tests. For example, in October, the luxury agency [Embark Beyond](#) teamed up with the health tech firm [eMed](#) to offer self-administered rapid antigen test kits for reentry into the United States. The process takes about 10 minutes and requires an Internet connection.

"Once you have the results, eMed emails an official negative covid lab report to you," says Jack Ezon, founder and managing partner of Embark Beyond.

Experts say you should probably get used to testing requirements. That's because air travel can spread an infectious respiratory disease from one side of the globe to the other in a day, which can set off a chain reaction of infection in a population, says Lisa Lee, a research professor in [Virginia Tech](#)'s Department of Population Health Sciences. "It is hard to say how long governments and airlines will continue to require coronavirus testing," she says.

Nicole LeBlanc, owner of [Mon Voyage](#), a travel agency in Dallas, says that, in the end, it's better to be safe than sorry.

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| | “Requirements can change suddenly,” she says. “When in doubt, get a PCR test — even if you don’t think you need it.” |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Significant storm Thanksgiving week? |
| SOURCE | https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/17/weather/thanksgiving-weather-forecast-travel/index.html |
| GIST | <p>(CNN)Holiday travel was reduced by the pandemic last year, but this time round it's expected to look more like business as usual -- with crowded airports and train stations and interstates turned into either parking lots or unofficial road races.</p> <p>And while the weather might not stop the masses from traveling this year, a potentially significant storm system in the East could put a wrinkle in Thanksgiving travel plans for many.</p> <p>"Potential continues for a strong cold front and significant storm to affect the East early next week," the Weather Prediction Center said Wednesday morning.</p> <p>There are still plenty of reasons for meteorologists to hedge their bets on next week's potential storm. Many technical atmospheric ingredients need to align for this storm to have dire impacts on holiday travel. Usually, meteorologists don't like to forecast a storm with this many variables this far in advance because many things are likely to change.</p> <p>Some of the forecast computer models have shown this potential storm for over 48 hours. With this consistency in the overall pattern, there is some increased confidence that there will be some impact from either strong winds, rain, or perhaps even snow from Chicago to New York.</p> <p>"This storm remains a prominent weather focus due to its timing right before Thanksgiving but it will likely still take a while to resolve the details," the WPC says.</p> <p>This is very true. The storm will have much worse impacts on the major East Coast cities if and when a separate, secondary storm center forms off the East Coast on Monday into Tuesday.</p> <p>"A lot of uncertainty in the forecast Sunday night and into early next week, so forecast has low confidence especially in terms of exact precipitation amounts, winds, and the timing of higher winds and precipitation," the National Weather Service in New York said Wednesday.</p> <p>This far out the best forecast guidance shows that "from Monday onward, the most likely evolution of this system would bring more of an enhanced rainfall threat to New England, ahead of the cold front/secondary low development," according to the WPC.</p> <p>The best snow potential would likely be from lake effect snow on the Great Lakes and along the Appalachians, from the Carolinas northeastward.</p> <p>"There is still enough uncertainty in system evolution to allow for other possibilities regarding precipitation types and amounts," the WPC said.</p> <p>Confidence is higher on the possibility of strong winds sweeping through the Plains to the East behind the storm. These winds can be just as disruptive to travel as any precipitation.</p> <p>"By Monday and Tuesday the eastern half of the country will be in a severely deep trough. This means the jet stream will look like a giant U right over the Great Lakes to the Northeast," said CNN meteorologist Chad Myers.</p> |

"Models are predicting wind speeds inside the jet stream to be over 190 mph in places. Pilots will be looking for the smoothest air to fly in, but many passengers are sure to hear 'Ladies and gentlemen, please keep your seat belts securely fastened.'"

What is most certain about this system is temperatures will be much colder after it passes from the Great Lakes to the Northeast and into the South.

The temperatures in the East will change like the emotions during a family Thanksgiving dinner over the next week.

One day it will be warm, then the next unseasonably cold, then unseasonably warm and then cold all over again.

The first colder air mass will infiltrate the East over the next couple of days and into the weekend. Temperatures will run about 10 to 15 degrees below normal for this time of the year and rebound back to average by Sunday.

"The next surge of colder air will spread across the eastern half of the lower 48 Monday-Tuesday with the broadest coverage of highs 10-15F below normal expected on Tuesday," the WPC says.

There is a good chance that most in the East during Thanksgiving week will see below-average temperatures.

For example, New York will likely be just above freezing for anyone that might venture out to watch a parade. When the quintessential Thanksgiving touch football game happens in the park, it will likely only peak just above 50 degrees.

A reenforcing shot of cold air arrives at the end of the week to keep much of the East below normal through the weekend after Thanksgiving.

The only other thing that is certain is that the closer we get to the storm, the more reliable the forecast will be. That and that turkey will be served countrywide next week.

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 No summit trilateral press conference |
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| SOURCE | https://www.cbsnews.com/news/biden-skips-press-conference-trudeau-obrador/ |
| GIST | <p>The "Three Amigos" gathering of the leaders of the U.S., Canada and Mexico on Thursday will be missing one of the staples of the summit: the joint news conference featuring all three leaders.</p> <p>It's the first in-person gathering of the leaders since 2016, before Donald Trump was elected president. Mr. Trump's relationship with the Canadian and Mexican leaders was strained by the tariffs he imposed, although later, he and Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador grew friendlier. That wasn't the case with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, whom Mr. Trump famously disparaged as "two-faced."</p> <p>Mr. Biden pitched himself as the return of normalcy and tradition when running for office against Mr. Trump, so skipping the press conference came as something of a surprise to White House reporters this week. In all eight summits held since their inception in 2005, there has been a trilateral press conference. Former President Obama hosted press conferences with his Canadian and Mexican counterparts in 2012, as did former President Bush in 2008 and 2005.</p> <p>At that last 2016 news conference, reporters were able to ask tough, even uncomfortable questions of Mr. Obama, Trudeau, and then Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto — in particular, about their responses to Mr. Trump's GOP nomination, victory and the future relations between the U.S. and Mexico on issues like NAFTA and migration.</p> |

"Whoever becomes the president of the United States is going to have a deep, strong interest in having a strong relationship with Mexico. It's our neighbor, our friend and one of our biggest trading partners," Mr. Obama said at the time. "I think I've made myself clear, setting aside whatever the candidates are saying, that America is a nation of immigrants. That's our strength."

Without a press conference Thursday, Mr. Biden will not be forced to answer questions about his decision to continue with Title 42, a controversial public health policy used at the Mexican border to rapidly expel migrants based on concerns about COVID-19. Mr. Biden has been roundly criticized by progressives and immigration advocates for continuing to rely on it to try to keep the numbers at the border down. A U.S. District Court judge in Texas has also determined the Biden administration improperly ended the "Remain in Mexico Policy."

Nonetheless, the summit and news conference have generally projected a kind of continental unity, one that may have peaked during the Obama years.

Last week, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said she thought a press conference had been planned. But no press conference appeared on the president's Thursday schedule released Wednesday night. The president does have a bill signing prior to his meetings with Trudeau and Obrador, and as always, it's possible he could take questions then.

Trudeau may be going it alone with the press at his own availability Thursday evening at the Canadian Embassy, according to the prime minister's schedule. The Mexican government has not yet said whether Obrador will hold a solo press conference after the meeting.

Mexico's Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard told CBS News during a press conference he held Wednesday that the resolution from the three leaders is "more precise" than a press conference.

Asked Wednesday about a joint press conference, White House deputy press secretary Chris Meagher said there would be "pool sprays" — that is, opportunities before meetings begin. In these brief on-camera moments, reporters have the chance to yell out questions, but leaders can just ignore the questions.

One reporter asked the White House on Wednesday whether the lack of the news conference could be chalked up to recent comments Mr. Biden has made that had to be "cleaned up" by the White House press office.

"You guys (the press office) had to clean up not only [Mr. Biden's] Olympic comment, but his comment on the timing for the Fed [chair nomination] and his Taiwan comment. Is the worry that you don't want the president taking questions," Bloomberg's Justin Sink asked Meagher.

In addition to the pool sprays, Meagher responded that "the president often takes questions throughout the course of the day, throughout the course of trips, throughout the course of his day at the White House."

Thursday's meetings are likely to have some contentious moments, aside from immigration matters. Canada and the U.S. have sparred over tariffs.

Though Mr. Trump did not host a North American Leaders Summit with his Mexican and Canadian counterparts, he met with them individually and at events elsewhere, and he was able to get a new trade agreement signed.

The three leaders plan to address economic challenges they face, COVID-19, climate change and other pressing issues. The White House says the three nations will "reaffirm their strong ties and integration while also charting a new path for collaboration on ending the COVID-19 pandemic and advancing health security; competitiveness and equitable growth, to include climate change; and a regional vision for migration."

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| HEADLINE | 11/18 SKorea faces record daily virus jump |
| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/skorea-sees-record-virus-jump-thousands-college-exam-81248500 |
| GIST | <p>SEOUL, South Korea -- South Korea reported its biggest daily jump in coronavirus infections since the start of the pandemic as hundreds of thousands of masked students flocked to schools on Thursday for the country's highly competitive college entrance exam amid growing concerns about the delta-driven spread.</p> <p>About 509,000 students were taking the one-day exam at 1,395 sites across the nation, including hospitals and shelters.</p> <p>The annual exam, called "Suneung," or the College Scholastic Ability Test, is crucial in the education-obsessed country, where careers, social standings and even marriage prospects greatly depend on which university a person attends.</p> <p>Students were required to have their temperatures taken before entering classrooms, and those with fevers were sent to separate testing areas. The Education Ministry said that 68 infected students and 105 others in self-quarantine took the hours-long test in isolation.</p> <p>The 3,292 new cases reported by the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency on Thursday marked the second straight day of over 3,000 cases. The agency said 29 patients died in the past 24 hours, bringing the death toll to 3,187, while 506 others were in serious or critical condition.</p> <p>To reduce noise, transportation authorities were planning to temporarily stop landings and departures of planes at airports during the English-listening part of the test. Government offices and private companies had their employees come in late, and the country's stock market delayed its opening by an hour to clear roads for test-takers.</p> <p>"(Students) weren't given proper classes (because of COVID-19) and I often saw my child worrying much and struggling," said Seo Kwang-sun, a mother of a test-taker in Seoul.</p> <p>While schools have been alternating between on-and-offline classes, the Education Ministry had planned a full return to classrooms starting next week to help reduce education gaps and align with the government's virus strategies.</p> <p>Officials eased social distancing rules starting this month in what they described as the first step toward restoring some pre-pandemic normalcy. In allowing larger social gatherings and longer indoor dining hours at restaurants, officials cited concerns about the pandemic's impact on the economy and expressed hope that improving vaccination rates would keep hospitalizations and deaths down even if the virus continues to spread.</p> <p>But there has been a rise in serious cases and fatalities among older people who rejected vaccines or whose immunities waned after being injected early in the mass immunization campaign that started in late February, prompting questions about whether the decision to loosen virus restrictions was premature.</p> <p>So far, officials have issued no plans to re-impose stricter social distancing measures or postpone a full reopening of schools.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Russia Covid deaths hit record |
| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/covid-19-deaths-russia-hit-record-2nd-straight-81250181 |
| GIST | <p>MOSCOW -- Coronavirus deaths in Russia hit record highs for the second straight day Thursday, while new daily cases appeared to be taking a downward trend but still remained higher than during previous waves of the pandemic.</p> |

Russia's state coronavirus task force reported that 1,251 people died of COVID-19 since the day before, the most since Russia had its first virus outbreak in March 2020. The previous record of 1,247 deaths was recorded Wednesday.

The task force also reported 37,374 new confirmed cases. Until this week, Russian authorities had recorded higher daily case numbers since late October.

Health experts have blamed the latest surge in infections and deaths on low vaccination rates and lax public attitudes toward taking precautions. Fewer than 40% of Russia's nearly 146 million people have been fully vaccinated, even though the country approved a domestically developed COVID-19 vaccine months before most of the world.

To boost immunization rates, the government said new restrictions would take effect next year and limit access to many public places, as well as domestic and international trains and flights, to those who have been fully vaccinated, have recovered from COVID-19 or are medically exempt from vaccination.

Officials have urged Russians to get vaccinated in the meantime.

In total, the coronavirus task force has reported over 9.2 million confirmed infections and more than 260,000 COVID-19 deaths, by far the highest death toll in Europe. Some experts believe the true figure is even higher.

Reports by Russia's statistical service, Rosstat, that tally coronavirus-linked deaths retroactively reveal much higher mortality. They say 462,000 people with COVID-19 died between April 2020 and September of this year.

Russian officials have said the task force only includes deaths for which COVID-19 was the main cause, and uses data from medical facilities. Rosstat uses wider criteria for counting virus-related deaths and takes its numbers from civil registry offices where registering a death is finalized.

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Czechs, Slovaks hit virus records |
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| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/czech-republic-slovakia-record-cases-mull-restrictions-81223044 |
| GIST | <p>PRAGUE -- The Czech Republic and Slovakia both reported record daily new coronavirus cases on Wednesday, a day before the two European Union countries plan to approve new restrictions for unvaccinated people in response to rising infections.</p> <p>Thousands in the capitals of both countries, Prague and Bratislava, used Wednesday's anniversary of the 1989 anti-communist Velvet Revolution to rally against their government's upcoming coronavirus restrictions.</p> <p>The protesters ignored social distancing and didn't wear masks. Police didn't intervene in Prague. In Bratislava, police said two officers sustained injuries after the crowd near the seat of the government detonated fire crackers.</p> <p>The Czech daily tally soared to 22,479 new cases, eclipsing the previous record set Jan. 7 by almost 5,000 and nearly 8,000 more than just a week ago. The country's infection rate rose to 813 new cases per 100,000 residents over the past seven days, up from 558 a week earlier.</p> <p>Czech Health Minister Adam Vojtech announced Wednesday he would propose new coronavirus restrictions to be approved by the government on Thursday.</p> <p>"We find ourselves in a very serious situation," Vojtech said. "There's a real risk that our hospitals will be overwhelmed,"</p> |

The key measure being proposed is that most unvaccinated people will no longer be allowed to attend public events, go to bars and restaurants or use hotels based on coronavirus test results. Only people who are vaccinated and those who have recovered from COVID-19 will remain eligible. Similar restrictions are in place in the German state of Bavaria.

They are expected to become effective on Monday.

“It's motivation for the unvaccinated to get vaccinated,” Vojtech said.

Exceptions include teenagers aged 12 to 18, medical personnel and visitors at hospitals and nursing homes.

Vojtech also urged companies to cancel their traditional Christmas parties and return to working at home wherever possible.

Slovakia reported 8,342 new virus cases, surpassing the previous record of 7,244 set Friday. The Slovak government is planning new restrictions on unvaccinated people as the country's hospitals are getting overwhelmed with COVID-19 patients.

Slovak Prime Minister Eduard Heger said his Cabinet would vote Thursday on recommendations from medical experts. Among the proposals, which would be instituted for three weeks, are banning unvaccinated people from nonessential stores, shopping malls, gyms, pools, hotels and mass public gatherings.

Slovakia's Health Ministry said 81% of the country's 2,879 hospitalized COVID-19 patients are unvaccinated.

The Czech Republic at 57.9% and Slovakia at 45.3% have vaccination rates well below the average of the EU's 27 nations.

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Census: no great migration in pandemic |
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| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/contrary-to-popular-belief-no-great-migration-in-pandemic/ |
| GIST | <p>Contrary to popular belief, there has been no great migration in the U.S. during the pandemic.</p> <p>New figures released Wednesday by the U.S. Census Bureau show that the proportion of people who moved over the past year fell to its lowest level in the 73 years that it has been tracked, in contradiction to popular anecdotes that people left cities en masse to escape COVID-19 restrictions or in search of more bucolic lifestyles.</p> <p>“Millennials living in New York City do not make up the world,” joked Thomas Cooke, a demographic consultant in Connecticut. “My millennial daughter’s friends living in Williamsburg, dozens of them came home. It felt like the world had suddenly moved, but in reality, this is not surprising at all.”</p> <p>In 2021, more than 27 million people, or 8.4% of U.S. residents, reported having moved in the past year, according to the Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement.</p> <p>By comparison, 9.3% of U.S. residents moved from 2019 to 2020. Three decades ago, that figure was 17%.</p> <p>Besides giving rise to shelter-in-place restrictions, the COVID-19 pandemic may have forced people to postpone life-cycle events such as marriages or having babies that often lead to moves. But the decline is part of a decadeslong migration decline in the U.S., said William Frey, a senior fellow at The Brookings Institution.</p> |

“These numbers show a lot of people didn’t move or moved at a slower rate,” Frey said. “But it’s a longer-term trend.”

That’s not to say that nobody moved. The one uptick in mobility patterns last year took place in longer-distance moves, from state to state, compared to moves within a state or county. Those 4.3 million residents who moved to another state may have done so because of the pandemic, Frey said.

Demographic expert Andrew Beveridge used change-of-address data to show that while people moved out of New York, particularly in well-heeled neighborhoods, at the height of the pandemic, those neighborhoods recouped their numbers just months later. Regarding the nation as a whole, Beveridge said he’s not surprised migration declined.

“The same thing happened during the financial crisis. Nobody moved. Nobody got married. Nobody had kids,” said Beveridge, a sociology professor at Queens College and the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York. “All demographic change sort of just screeches to a halt.”

Other factors contributing to Americans staying put have been an aging population, since older people are less likely to move than younger ones; the ability to telecommute for work, which allowed some workers to change jobs without having to move; and rising home prices and rents that kept some would-be movers in place, demographers said.

“I think the boom in remote work because of COVID coupled with the economic shock is the big reason,” said Mary Craigle, bureau chief for Montana’s Research and Information Services.

Mobility in the U.S. has been on a downward slide since 1985 when 20% of U.S. residents moved. That was an era when Baby Boomers were young adults, beginning careers, getting married and starting families. In comparison, millennials, who today are in the same age range as their baby boomer cohorts were in the mid-1980s, are stuck in place due to high housing costs and underemployment, according to an analysis Frey did last year.

Advancements in telecommunications and transportation have contributed to the decadeslong decline in U.S. mobility. Nowadays, people can get an education, work and visit family and friends remotely. In the last half of the last century, the highway system allowed people to work 50 miles from their homes without having to move closer for work, said Cooke, a professor emeritus at the University of Connecticut.

Rising economic insecurity over the decades also has made U.S. residents less mobile since “when there’s insecurity, people value what they already have,” he said.

The slowdown in American mobility is part of a recent stagnation in population dynamics in the U.S. The 2020 census shows that the U.S. grew by only 7.4% over the previous decade, the slowest rate since between 1930 and 1940. Earlier this week, the Census Bureau revealed that the population center of the U.S. moved only 11.8 miles, the smallest shift in 100 years.

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 China military ready to invade Taiwan? |
| SOURCE | https://www.usnews.com/news/world-report/articles/2021-11-17/chinese-military-at-or-near-ability-to-invade-taiwan-us-agency-concludes |
| GIST | <p>The Chinese military has now or will soon have the ability to invade Taiwan, a U.S. government agency has concluded, documenting also failed attempts by China and the U.S. to better understand one another's intentions.</p> <p>The People's Liberation Army, China's name for its military, is capable of landing at least 25,000 troops on the island nation to establish an initial beachhead, according to the newly released annual report from the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, a congressionally appointed agency designed to provide specific and nonpartisan national security and economic advice to Congress and the president.</p> |

"They're giving all the signs this is an option they're considering to be viable," former Republican Sen. Jim Talent of Missouri, now a member of the commission, told reporters Wednesday morning following the release of this year's report.

Further complicating existing U.S. efforts to deter China from seizing control of Taiwan by force are new tactics the PLA has employed that offset some of the U.S. military's potency in the region. The report documents that the Chinese military has trained with barges, ferries and other civilian vessels to transport military troops across the Taiwan Straits or elsewhere – in addition to more conventional military transports.

"Given these deployments, it has become less certain that U.S. conventional military forces alone will continue to deter China's leaders from initiating an attack on Taiwan," the report concludes.

The new assessment comes at a particularly fraught time for Taiwan, a democracy formally recognized only by a shrinking number of minor nations. China, which has used economic and diplomatic pressure to isolate Taipei internationally, considers its government illegitimate and the island nothing more than a rogue territory of the mainland.

Concerns about military action have spiked in recent months following U.S. and Taiwanese assessments that a Chinese bid to retake control of the island by force could take place within years. China has also [expressed outrage](#) at growing U.S. willingness to acknowledge the presence of American military trainers in Taiwan.

Though the current U.S. administration policies focus on overtures to Beijing, President Joe Biden fueled Chinese paranoia of U.S. support for formal Taiwanese independence during remarks he made during a high-profile video summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Monday. Biden later clarified, "We are not encouraging independence" – in keeping with decades-old U.S.-China policy – but not before Chinese state media blasted the original comments as "a dangerous sign."

Indeed, Xi himself warned Biden about Taiwan during their summit, which was otherwise largely seen as a productive step toward a more functional relationship following the bellicose approach of the Trump administration. Any intention of using Taiwan to contain China is "just like playing with fire," Xi said of one of the Chinese Communist Party's most sensitive issues. He added, "whoever plays with fire will get burnt."

A growing chasm in understanding between Washington and Beijing also contributes to rising concern about Taiwan. This shortcoming is particularly troublesome among the Chinese military leaders that would carry out an assault on the island nation or oversee other activities that the U.S. and its partners could misconstrue as such – such as China's [recent aerial incursions](#) near Taiwan's airspace.

"Having worked with the Chinese military for many years, it's not a high priority for the Chinese military to engage in de-escalation measures," Roy Kamphausen with the National Bureau of Asian Research, and another member of the commission, also told reporters Monday when asked about the two countries' ability to slow an accidental march to war. "They regard that as a political set of activities and the military avoids those actions unless they are within very tightly bounded parameters."

"In the event of miscalculation," he adds, "there's much less autonomy at the tactical level for the Chinese military leaders to respond in de-escalatory ways."

That shortfall produces a higher likelihood of escalation in the short term, Kamphausen adds, pointing out that China's political leaders would need to intervene.

Yet despite recent bellicose rhetoric toward Taiwan, China's commitment to a forceful reunification of the island remains unclear. Its political leadership ultimately would make a decision to invade, not its military, and it faces substantial constraints on its ability to wield that force, the commission's report concludes.

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| | <p>"These include the inherent uncertainty of a military confrontation with the United States, the extensive damage that would likely result to the Chinese economy, and the risk that an attack on Taiwan could prompt the formation of a coalition of countries determined to constrain any further growth in China's power and influence," it states.</p> <p>The U.S.-China commission recommended in its latest report that the U.S. enhance its deterrent capabilities in the region, including making it easier for Taiwan to buy military equipment that could contribute to its self defense and to move more U.S. military resources into the region to ensure their survivability in the case of conflict with China.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Anonymous: SPD officers at Capitol riot |
| SOURCE | https://mynorthwest.com/3241873/names-seattle-officers-washington-dc-capitol-riot-remain-anonymous/ |
| GIST | <p>The identities of the six Seattle police officers in Washington, D.C., during the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol will remain anonymous after a ruling from the state Supreme Court this week — at least for now.</p> <p>All six officers were in Washington, D.C., for former President Donald Trump's now-infamous rally at the White House, but claimed they were not part of the ensuing riots at the U.S. Capitol. A subsequent investigation from Seattle's Office of Police Accountability found that at least two of the officers broke the law while in D.C. Both of those officers were subsequently terminated.</p> <p>Earlier in 2021, the City of Seattle originally planned to publish the identities of the six officers as part of an update on the active investigation into their conduct at the event, and had notified the officers of that, and the fact that four people had filed public records requests for that information as well. Upon receiving that notification from the city, the officers successfully halted the release of their information in late February, arguing that they feared for their safety and reputations should their names become public.</p> <p>A King County judge then ruled in early March that the names could be released, after a one-week restraining order was set to expire. An appeals court commission stepped in shortly after that, extending that restraining order to allow the officers' identities to remain anonymous while the process continued to play out in court.</p> <p>After that, the case landed in front of the Supreme Court of Washington State, which ruled this week to send it back to a lower court, extending the restraining order another 30 days "pending further proceedings."</p> <p>At least for now, the six officers will continue to be referred to as Jane and John Does in official court documents.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 DC Guard narrative Capitol riot in question |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2021/11/17/january-6-william-walker-national-guard/ |
| GIST | <p>The D.C. National Guard's commanding general was directed twice by Pentagon leadership to send in troops as violence engulfed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, according to a newly released investigation that appears to undercut the now-retired general's claim that he would have responded to the riot more quickly if Trump administration officials had allowed.</p> <p>Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy first notified Maj. Gen. William Walker by phone at 4:35 p.m. that Walker was authorized to send troops to Capitol Hill, and then called the general again "to reissue the deployment order" about 30 minutes after McCarthy "originally conveyed it," an unidentified Army witness told investigators with the independent Defense Department Inspector General, according to a newly released report. A timeline of events that day, assembled by the inspector general's office, also indicates separate calls were made.</p> |

The investigation's findings bring new scrutiny to Walker, who earlier this year was lauded for his candor in publicly recounting how dysfunction at the Pentagon stalled the National Guard's response as supporters of President Donald Trump brutalized police and panicked lawmakers pleaded for help. Speaking at a joint Senate hearing on March 3, Walker recalled having a quick reaction force (QRF) geared up and said he was frustrated by the speed at which senior defense officials were responding. He told senators it was 5:08 p.m. when he received approval to deploy. The Capitol was breached at 1:50 p.m.

Three weeks after the Senate hearing, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) appointed him House sergeant-at-arms, saying Walker was a "leader of great integrity" and that he would be "[an important asset to the House](#)", particularly in light of the January 6 insurrection."

Walker, in a phone interview late Wednesday, said he was shocked the inspector general's office released what he characterized as inaccurate, uncorroborated statements by anonymous Army officials. He said he tried to send personnel to the Capitol hours earlier and was ready to go when was first notified.

"These were exigent circumstances. Rome was burning," Walker said. "I came danger-close to just saying, 'Hey, we're going,' and then resign. But prudent people talked me out of that decision. It probably wouldn't have been the right one."

Walker said he was not allowed to respond to the anonymous statements before the report, calling the inspector general's work sloppy and illustrative that he is up against "the most powerful Army in the world."

"And I believe in that Army," he added. "But that Army failed on January 6th."

McCarthy, through a spokesperson, declined to comment.

It's unclear why Walker was never asked for a response to the claims he was told twice to dispatch his forces. A spokeswoman for the inspector general's office, Megan Reed, said that as a matter of practice, she could not comment on the office's oversight processes. The investigation concluded that, overall, the Pentagon's response was "reasonable in light of the circumstances."

Walker told Congress in his testimony that memorandums issued by McCarthy and Trump's acting defense secretary, Christopher C. Miller, restricted his ability to quickly dispatch the National Guard, but Army officials interviewed by the inspector general said Walker was aware of those decisions ahead of time and did not voice objection.

"The discussion of QRF implementation beforehand was very clear and General Walker understood it and he knew exactly what needed to happen if the QRF needed to be employed and he had no questions or concerns at that time," said one member of the Army staff, according to the report.

The [discrepancy in timelines](#) has come up before. Days after the assault, the Pentagon released an account of events that said Miller provided verbal authorization at 4:32 p.m. to "re-mission" the National Guard in support of Capitol Police and that Guardsmen began departing from the D.C. Armory precisely 30 minutes later. A National Guard timeline released in January did not mention a call at 4:32 p.m.

Investigators interviewed 44 witnesses, including Walker, McCarthy, Miller and Army Gen. Mark A. Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Other witnesses included members of the Army staff and D.C. National Guard, D.C. Mayor Muriel E. Bowser, D.C. Police Chief Robert J. Contee III and former Capitol Police chief Steven Sund, who was forced to resign after the attack.

Mirroring his Senate testimony, Walker told the inspector general's investigators that he was "stunned" and "frustrated" during a 2:22 p.m. conference call, when city officials asked for National Guard assistance and senior Army officers — Lt. Gens. Charles Flynn and Walter Piatt — advised against providing it.

Other witnesses interviewed as part of the investigation said that Piatt was concerned about public blowback over the sight of uniformed military personnel potentially confronting political protesters, but that the Army had not ruled out helping and needed a plan before inserting soldiers into the crisis.

Walker, when asked by Piatt and Flynn for an operational plan, told the generals that he wanted to get his personnel onto buses and en route to the Capitol while taking direction from police officials, he told investigators. Piatt wanted more specifics.

“It would be like me saying, ‘Go to Baghdad and just find somebody and see what they need,’ ” Piatt said in his interview with investigators.

Flynn’s involvement became controversial because his brother is retired Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, a former Trump adviser who called for the military to participate in re-running the 2020 election. Army officials falsely asserted for days that Charles Flynn was not at the meeting, before [Flynn confirmed that he was briefly involved](#) in a statement to The Washington Post. The inspector general report affirms as much, saying other Army witnesses told investigators that Flynn’s involvement was “minimal.”

Piatt told inspector general investigators that he was unable to calm other officials, saying someone on the conference call warned that they would tell the media that the Army had denied the Capitol Police request for help. Another Army witness said Bowser made that statement. An official close to Bowser said Wednesday that the mayor did not speak during the call. It is not clear who else may have issued the warning.

A short time later, Army officials told investigators that claim leaked to the media anonymously, and McCarthy and his staff took time to respond to inquiries from journalists and members of Congress during the crisis.

An unidentified Army witness told inspector general investigators that McCarthy went to D.C. Metropolitan Police headquarters after the conference call, at about 3:48 p.m., in part because Walker “could not clearly articulate to his staff” specifically what police needed.

“Mr. McCarthy, Mayor Bowser, Chief Contee, and others present drafted a plan that identified where the [D.C. National Guard] personnel would go, the route they would take, with whom they would connect when they arrived, what they would do when they got there, whom they would support, who was in charge, and who the key leaders were,” the report said.

The report made several recommendations for improvement, including ensuring that all D.C. National Guard members have functioning communications equipment issued by the Defense Department, formulating a plan for how the Pentagon and D.C. Guard might respond to any future major disturbance in the D.C. area, and establishing criteria and training for personnel who could be tasked with responding.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said in a statement that the Defense Department “takes seriously all reports of the Department’s independent Inspector General,” and is reviewing findings and recommendations in the report.

“We are grateful for their work,” he said.

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Arab outreach to Assad raises Syria hope |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/syria-assad-uae-arab-relations/2021/11/17/0c837d9a-4624-11ec-beca-3cc7103bd814_story.html |
| GIST | Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has received a significant boost in recent weeks, with key Arab countries indicating they are prepared to reengage with his regime after ostracizing it for a decade, raising hopes in Damascus for an influx of investments to help rebuild the country’s shattered infrastructure and economy. |

A telephone call last month between Assad and Jordan's King Abdullah II marked the highest-level contact between Syria and a U.S.-allied Arab country in years. The visit by the Emirati foreign minister, Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan, with Assad in Damascus last week furthered the sense that Syria's isolation from its neighbors could be coming to an end.

These contacts signal a new readiness to accept the inevitability of Assad's survival among Arab countries that backed the anti-Assad uprising and expelled Syria from the Arab League, analysts say.

"After almost 11 years of boycotts and disconnect, it's time to turn the page, start a new chapter in Syria's history and bring back Syria to the Arab fold," said Abdulkhaleq Abdulla, a political analyst in the United Arab Emirates.

But many obstacles remain after a decade of war that polarized the region, destroyed Syria and still simmers on, though major fighting has stopped, and investment in the country remains largely unattractive.

Qatar reiterated last week that it would not contemplate reengaging with Syria without a meaningful process of reform and accountability. "Normalizing relations with [the] Assad regime is not a step that we are thinking of or considering right now," Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani told reporters.

In an interview earlier this month with CNBC, Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan al-Saud said that Saudi Arabia is also "currently . . . not considering" full re-engagement with the Syrian government, although Saudi and Syrian intelligence officials have exchanged visits on a number of occasions in recent months.

Saudi Arabia and Qatar were among the biggest Arab supporters of the Syrian rebels during the revolt against Assad's rule. Egypt, which could play a key role in ensuring Syria's full re-acceptance by the Arab world, never entirely severed diplomatic relations with Damascus and maintains regular contact with Syrian government officials. But Cairo has stopped short of full re-engagement, while pressing, without result, for progress in the seven-year-old U.N.-sponsored negotiations over a political reform process in Syria.

Some Arab countries are squeamish about engaging too energetically with a regime held responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people in its efforts to crush the rebellion, said Abdulla.

But the UAE believes the imperative of countering Iran's expanded influence in Syria — where Tehran maintains troops, bases and allied militias in support of the Assad government — overrides any other concerns, he said. He predicted that other Arab countries would soon overcome their reluctance and follow the UAE's lead in reengaging with Assad, including by taking the symbolically important step of readmitting Syria to the Arab League.

"Morally, no one wants to reach out to this guy. He committed atrocities. But it is politically justified," Abdulla said. "If this really goes according to plan, it will mean less of Iran in Syria and more of the Arabs in Syria."

The State Department publicly conveyed its disapproval of the Emirati foreign minister's visit to Damascus. "We will not normalize or upgrade our diplomatic relations with the Assad regime, nor do we support other countries normalizing or upgrading their relations, given the atrocities that this regime has inflicted on its own people," State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters last week.

Although the United States has made clear that it does not support the UAE's approaches to Assad, it has not tried to oppose them, said Abdulla, offering what he called a "yellow light" to Arab countries to proceed as they wish.

A senior U.S. official noted that many of the moves toward normalization, including the restoration of diplomatic relations between the UAE and Syria in 2018, started during the Trump administration, when the most draconian U.S. sanctions on Syria were imposed.

These sanctions, designed to prevent any investment that might benefit Assad or his regime, are an immediate hindrance to the kind of Arab investments that Syria's economy most badly needs. U.S. officials say the Biden administration is not softening its enforcement of the sanctions, though pace has slowed since President Biden took office.

"Unfortunately, this is a trend [toward normalization] that we've seen in the region . . . but we've certainly not changed our sanctions posture or our policy," said a senior U.S. official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss diplomatic matters.

Apart from sanctions, potential investors in Syria are deterred by the business climate, the dire state of the economy and the potential for instability, analysts and business executives say.

Chronic shortages of electricity and fuel and the lack of a functioning banking system make the country an unappealing investment destination. A drive by the Syrian government to coerce companies into handing over cash supposedly owed in taxes and fines has precipitated a fresh exodus of Syrian business executives, further deepening the economic gloom.

"This is going to discourage investment in the country, when you have [Syrian] business executives leaving the country," said Jihad Yazigi, editor of the authoritative Syria Report, a business publication. "Certainly the mood is very pessimistic. And anyone who is not thinking of leaving is postponing their projects."

Low-level engagement among security officials, diplomats and business delegations is likely to continue, helping Assad to bolster his legitimacy among Syrians, said Bassam Barabandi, a defected Syrian diplomat living in Washington. "They send the message that 'we are winning, we are strong, we are coming back,'" he said. "But it's empty, it's hollow."

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 DOH: 758,483 cases, 9056 deaths |
| SOURCE | https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/coronavirus/article255897491.html |
| GIST | <p>The COVID-19 pandemic has claimed the lives of more than 9,000 Washington residents, according to the Washington state Department of Health.</p> <p>On Wednesday, the agency reported 2,189 new COVID-19 cases and 27 new deaths.</p> <p>As of Wednesday, statewide totals from the illness caused by the coronavirus are 758,483 and 9,056 deaths. The case total includes 90,768 infections listed as probable. Death data is considered complete only through Oct. 31. DOH revises previous case and death counts daily.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 WA job growth slows; surges nationally |
| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/business/job-growth-slows-in-washington-even-as-it-surges-nationally/ |
| GIST | <p>The national job market may be rebounding, but hiring slowed in Washington in October, raising questions about the state's recovery as it heads into its second pandemic winter.</p> <p>Employers in Washington added just 6,300 jobs last month, according to the October employment report released Wednesday from the state Employment Security Department.</p> <p>That's down substantially from September's revised number of 18,800 jobs and represents the smallest increase since May, when the state added just 2,700 jobs, according the report. The state's unemployment rate fell to 5%, down slightly from 5.1% in September.</p> |

To be fair, Washington's dismal October numbers were heavily affected by the estimated loss of 9,300 education and other government jobs, a figure that may be lowered as more data comes in.

But hiring by private employers was down around 16%, to 15,600, compared to September. "So even if you just look at the private sector jobs ... [October] is still coming in a little bit light," said Paul Turek, ESD state economist.

The weaker hiring makes Washington something of an outlier: nationally, hiring in October surged by 531,000 jobs, or 70% over September's revised number.

And, perversely, Washington's slow October also comes as many employers are still struggling to find enough workers.

That was especially clear in the state's leisure and hospitality industry, which includes restaurants, hotels, and arts, entertainment, and recreation businesses.

Nationally, those businesses saw the most October hiring of any industry. But the 1,700 leisure and hospitality jobs Washington added last month represent barely half of what the state would have seen had it matched the national trend, said Jacob Vigdor, an economist with the University of Washington Evans School of Public Policy who has studied state and local job markets.

[Leisure and hospitality jobs have also been among the hardest to fill during the pandemic.](#) Restaurants "are still struggling" to hire, said restaurateur Eric Banh, co-owner of the Seattle-area Ba Bar and Monsoon restaurants. Although his own staff shortages have eased from earlier this summer, managerial positions remain hard to fill.

It's not all bad news: Washington posted relatively strong gains in manufacturing, a sector that saw huge losses early in the pandemic. The 6,000 added manufacturing jobs represent around 10% of all manufacturing jobs added nationally, which is more than four times Washington's share of the U.S. population, Vigdor said.

But October's report also underscored the way the pandemic continues to have disparate impacts on industries and socioeconomic groups. While hiring was strong in professional services jobs, it was worryingly low or even negative in several industries that provide jobs for many lower-income workers, including leisure and hospitality businesses.

Also worrying: the state saw job losses in construction, an industry that has long been an economic driver for the region, and the transportation and warehousing sector, which is key to the supply chain.

"This is a funky jobs report for Washington state, with some sectors doing really well and others remarkably bad," Vigdor said.

Some of Washington's lackluster performance reflects the combined impacts of a continuing pandemic and seasonal conditions, Vigdor said. Unusually heavy rains in October, he said, had the twin effect of "detering people from going out to enjoy leisure and hospitality and slowing down construction projects."

Another potential factor behind the differences between state and national trends may reflect Washington's relatively conservative approach to COVID-19 restrictions, said Hart Hodges, an economist and director of the Center for Economic and Business Research at Western Washington University.

"I wonder if some parts of the country are a little more cavalier about COVID and getting back to 'normal' while other parts — like us — are still being cautious," Hodges said. "If so, we might expect slower job growth in the cautious areas."

The October report also shows how far Washington has yet to go to recover from the massive job losses early in the pandemic. As of October, the state workforce was still 63,500 jobs short of its October 2019 size.

Most of that deficit is centered in the Seattle area, which is still down by 52,100 jobs, compared with October 2019, state data show. But the Seattle area also grabbed the lion's share of job growth in October: Although the region represents around half the state's workforce, it accounted around two-thirds of private hiring in October.

October's job numbers also did little to clarify the reasons behind the state's labor shortage. For example, even as job growth slowed, the number of people collecting unemployment benefits in Washington also fell. The four-week moving average of weekly continued jobless claims dropped by around 13,163, to 50,848, as of Oct. 30, compared to the period ending Oct. 2, the ESD reported Monday. That's the lowest 4-week moving average since the pandemic started last year.

Still, despite the disappointing numbers, some employers and economists said the conditions are right for job growth to pick up in coming months. [Wages are rising in many labor-crunched sectors](#). Some warehouse operators recently have offered signing bonuses of \$2,000 to \$3,000, and many fast-food chains have raised starting wages — to \$19 at Dick's Drive-In and \$20 at some Taco Time locations.

The resumption of in-person school in September means many parents who were forced to stay home can now look for jobs. And, Turek said, many unemployed workers may be more motivated now that enhanced unemployment benefits, which added \$300 a week on top of regular unemployment benefits, are no longer available.

Over the last quarter, a large fraction of economic growth and consumer spending was fueled by people tapping savings, Turek said. But, he added, "at some point, that runs out — you can't hold out forever without income coming in."

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Portland turns to emergency water supply |
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| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/portland-switches-to-emergency-water-supply/ |
| GIST | <p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Portland, Oregon, is using its emergency water supply system rather than the Bull Run watershed after a toppled tree damaged a treatment plant east of the city.</p> <p>The Portland Water Bureau said it began using safe-to-drink groundwater from the Columbia South Shore Well Field on Monday, when a windstorm sent a tall evergreen crashing into the bureau's Lusted Hill facility in Gresham, the Oregonian/OregonLive reported.</p> <p>The impact battered the roof and interior of the building and broke the facility's corrosion treatment equipment, said bureau spokeswoman Jaymee Cuti.</p> <p>Cuti was unable to say how much it would cost to fix the damage and didn't know when they would switch back over to Portland's primary water supply, which is drawn from Bull Run Lake near Mt. Hood.</p> <p>The city has switched to water from the Columbia South Shore Well Field 43 times since 1985, Willamette Week reported Monday. Water officials said climate change will likely increase Portland's reliance on its emergency water supply system.</p> <p>"We can expect more extreme weather events like the recent rains that have impacted the region," bureau director Gabriel Solmer said in a statement. "Groundwater allows us to reliably provide water to people when severe storms impact the Bull Run watershed or we have other supply disruptions."</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Seattle schools urge mandatory vaccine |
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| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab/seattle-school-board-urges-washington-state-department-of-health-to-make-covid-vaccines-mandatory-for-students/ |
| GIST | <p>After delaying a vote on the issue twice, Seattle Public Schools board members are now urging the state Department of Health to begin a review to add the COVID-19 vaccine to the list of immunizations required to attend school.</p> <p>During Wednesday’s regular meeting, school board members unanimously approved a resolution that “urges” the Washington State Board of Health to consider making the COVID vaccine a requirement for children ages 5 and older once it’s been fully approved by the Food and Drug Administration.</p> <p>Earlier this month the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention gave the final signoff to Pfizer’s vaccine for children 5 to 11, making all school-aged children eligible for a vaccine.</p> <p>About 18 protesters stood outside the board meeting room and could be heard inside the board room shouting “no vax mandate.” A few people also came into the board room, holding signs. It’s not the first time protesters have shown up — they were also outside the building the last time the resolution was considered by the board, earlier this month.</p> <p>Board members took issue with some of the comments made by community members during public comments, including those that included misinformation about the pandemic.</p> <p>“As folks are shaking their heads in the audience and raising their voices outside, please continue, that is your God-given right (of free speech),” board member Brandon Hersey said. “But it is also my God-given right as an elected official to make sure that I keep every child in this district safe and that is exactly what I intend to do.”</p> <p>For those who don’t want to receive the vaccine if it were to become a requirement for students, “you do not have to participate,” board member Liza Rankin said. No one is forced to attend public school, she added.</p> <p>A vaccine mandate would make schools safer and allow more children to “equitably access” in-person education, the resolution says. The pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on “students furthest from educational justice” because of inequities in technology, transportation, family flexibility and food security, according to the resolution.</p> <p>The State Board of Health is working with the state Department of Health to convene a technical advisory group to consider adding the COVID vaccine to the list of immunizations for students, officials said. The health board “anticipates” holding a briefing in January during its public meeting to discuss the progress of the advisory group.</p> <p>According to the state Department of Health, 189 COVID outbreaks have occurred in Washington’s K-12 schools between Aug. 1 and Sept. 30. Since the start of the school year, there have been 709 coronavirus cases reported in Seattle schools as of Friday, according to the district’s COVID dashboard.</p> <p>Board members have been hesitant to vote on the resolution, which was first brought to the Seattle School Board on Oct. 13, out of concerns for the community. At first, the board wanted more time to connect with families, hear their concerns, answer any questions and provide information about the vaccine.</p> <p>When the resolution was brought up for the second vote at the beginning of the month, the board wanted more time to bring the revised resolution back to the community so as to minimize confusion.</p> <p>Board members have reached out to students of color, the Seattle Special Education PTSA, the NAACP, Latinx Community with Public Health, Families of Color Seattle, the Somali community and Native American families.</p> |

School districts in Washington don't have the authority to require students to receive a specific vaccine — only the state has that power. That's not the case in California, where some of the largest school districts have already taken steps to require student coronavirus vaccinations.

[Los Angeles Unified School District](#) and [Oakland Unified School District](#) require students 12 and older to receive the vaccine to attend in-person school. The San Diego Unified School District requires students [16 and older to be vaccinated](#). Last month, California became [the first state in the country](#) to announce a plan to add the coronavirus vaccine to the list of immunizations to attend in-person school for middle and high school children.

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Sumas repairs; 85% homes damaged |
| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/weather/sumas-residents-turn-to-repairs-as-officials-monitor-flooding-in-canada/ |
| GIST | <p>In Sumas, up near the Canadian border where this week's river of rain caused trains to derail and City Hall to flood, the damage to homes is worse than expected with an estimated 85% of residences damaged.</p> <p>That's up from the 75% estimated Tuesday, said Mayor Kyle Christensen, who, along with crews and volunteers, spent Wednesday assessing the situation and organizing clean-up efforts.</p> <p>"We're just starting to get a better idea of how bad it is," he said, adding it appeared more than 300 homes were damaged in the town of 1,300 people.</p> <p>Christensen said roads that were underwater Tuesday are now mostly open and residents have started returning to their homes. Some areas remain flooded, including downtown and City Hall, he said, and advised the public not to drive through flooded areas.</p> <p>"You would want to do that in an SUV or truck," he said. "I wouldn't want to try it in a car."</p> <p>With mostly clear skies forecast for the rest of the week and receding rivers, residents of the lowland Sumas Prairie turned their focus to repairs even while the city officials reminded folks to keep a go bag ready, "just in case."</p> <p>Throughout the region, people were helping neighbors haul out storm water and take damaged furniture and household goods to the four dumpsters set out by the city. Some were driving house to house, checking on conditions for those who have not yet returned. Others were organizing meals for emergency workers and flood victims.</p> <p>"People in this city and community are really coming together," Christensen said.</p> <p>Christensen said that the city of Sumas requires homes to have flood insurance and therefore, he believes that at last three-quarters of the damaged homes are covered.</p> <p>"The others will be on their own and that's a concern," he said.</p> <p>City officials said they will be continuing to monitor water levels in Canada, including any concerns about the Barrowtown pump station, which had been in danger of being inundated with flood waters flowing north from the Nooksack River. Christensen said experts have assured him there would be time to alert residents if that were to change.</p> <p>The danger of catastrophic flooding in Abbotsford, B.C. was averted, according to CBC Canada, when 150 staff, volunteers and farmers worked overnight Tuesday to build a sandbag dam to hold back rising waters. The mayor of Abbotsford had issued a public alert on Tuesday night saying that failure at the pump station was imminent.</p> |

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| | <p>Sumas officials on the city's Facebook page said some areas of town remain without power. They warned people to be cautious while turning on breakers, with reports of sparks and even small fires from those doing so.</p> <p>"These families and businesses need our prayers and support as we start the process of cleanup and rebuilding over the next few days," the city said in another Facebook post.</p> <p>Nearly all of the flooded waterways, including the Skagit River that wraps around Mount Vernon, had crested by Tuesday morning. However, the Skagit flood warning remains in effect until Thursday night, because massive volumes of water in the Cascades and foothills will take a while to drain.</p> <p>More than 500 rescues and evacuations were reported in the Sumas area, including stalled motorists. Gov. Jay Inslee and Whatcom County Executive Satpal Singh Sidhu issued disaster declarations as has the Premier of British Columbia, where high water, mud and rock slides have cut off critical transportation routes.</p> <p>South of Sumas, a body was recovered Wednesday in a wooded area in Everson, according to the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office. Authorities believe the body is Jose Garcia, who was reported missing by his family early Monday morning after his car was swept by floodwaters on his way to work.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Health leaders urge holiday caution |
| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/health-leaders-urge-caution-at-upcoming-holiday-gatherings-reminding-washingtonians-of-last-years-winter-covid-surge/ |
| GIST | <p>Washington's COVID-19 trends continue in the "right direction," state health leaders said Wednesday, though concerns remain over a potential holiday season surge.</p> <p>"This is a really important time for all of us," state Secretary of Health Dr. Umair A. Shah said during a news briefing. "... Where we are in November 2021 is actually very similar to where we were in November of 2020."</p> <p>He continued, "If you remember at that time, we had started to see an increase [in coronavirus cases and hospitalizations], and that increase then led to our third and very sustained wave over the holidays. That is the caution that all of us have."</p> <p>Last fall, the state had already seen two waves of the coronavirus — the first in late February and another during the summer — and had started to reach lower levels of infections, hospitalizations and deaths when signs of another surge began to emerge. At the beginning of October 2020, the state's seven-day infection rate was about 54.2 cases per 100,000 people. By the end of November, it had skyrocketed to 284.9 cases per 100,000, as colder weather drove people back indoors and gatherings picked up during the holidays.</p> <p>Hospitalizations and deaths also rose to the highest levels the state had seen at that point.</p> <p>State health leaders have fears the same could happen this year.</p> <p>"We are concerned that if we do not continue to get people vaccinated and people to take the appropriate precautions that very quickly this trend that's going in the right direction ... leads to an uptick into a sixth wave," Shah said Wednesday.</p> <p>As of early November, epidemiologists estimated Washington's infection rate was about 157.7 per 100,000 and the hospitalization rate about 8.9 per 100,000 — reflecting a continued decline since the state's most recent summer surge peaked in September.</p> <p>Deaths have also steadily decreased, but Shah said they're still higher than he'd like to see. As of mid-October, about 1.2% of those with a recorded infection died of the disease in Washington.</p> |

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| | <p>This year, however, widespread availability of vaccinations will hopefully make a difference, Shah added.</p> <p>This week, the state announced 80% of eligible Washingtonians have received at least their first vaccine dose, including more than 60,000 kids between ages 5 and 11. More than 820,000 people have also gotten either a booster shot or a third dose.</p> <p>“The bottom line is if you’re ill, don’t guess — take a test,” said Lacy Fehrenbach, the state’s deputy secretary for COVID-19 response, who recommended using rapid or PCR tests before traveling to see family or friends this winter. “We want your event to be uneventful.”</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 OSHA suspends vaccine mandate activities |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/17/osha-has-suspended-activities-related-bidens-vacci/ |
| GIST | <p>The Occupational Safety and Health Administration suspended work on President Biden’s vaccine mandate after a federal appeals court hit pause on rules that would force companies with 100 or more employees to require COVID-19 vaccinations or regular testing for coronavirus infection.</p> <p>OSHA said the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals’ decision to stay the mandate forced its hand but that the fight over Mr. Biden’s rule, or emergency temporary standard (ETS), isn’t over.</p> <p>“While OSHA remains confident in its authority to protect workers in emergencies, OSHA has suspended activities related to the implementation and enforcement of the ETS pending future developments in the litigation,” the agency said on its website.</p> <p>The 5th Circuit froze the mandate late Friday, citing “a multitude of reasons” to believe that a legal challenge is “likely to succeed on the merits.” OSHA’s decision to stop its work went largely unnoticed until Wednesday.</p> <p>The suspension was the latest reminder of the fault lines around Mr. Biden’s decision to reach into the private sector and require big employers to ensure that their workers are vaccinated by Jan. 4 or are tested for the coronavirus at least once a week.</p> <p>The regulation has sparked dozens of lawsuits and pushback from business groups, which say they don’t want to wrangle with their employees on the cusp of the holiday season and can’t afford to lose workers in a tight labor market.</p> <p>Employers aren’t required to develop a roster of vaccinated and unvaccinated employees until early December, and the testing rules don’t kick in until the new year. Even so, challengers celebrated OSHA’s suspension as a sign that the mandate is teetering and they should accelerate their efforts as the fight pivots to the 6th U.S. Court of Appeals.</p> <p>“While I am pleased with the actions taken by the court and that OSHA has subsequently suspended President Biden’s unconstitutional vaccine mandate for now, I will continue fighting to put a full stop to his efforts to fire Americans for choosing to not get the vaccine,” said Sen. Roger Marshall, Kansas Republican. “Joe Biden’s mandate is a slap in the face to so many people, including our essential workers, who answered the call last year. These are real people working to feed their families and pay their mortgages.”</p> <p>Mr. Marshall, all 49 other Senate Republicans and more than 160 House Republicans backed a disapproval resolution Wednesday that would use the Congressional Review Act to quash the OSHA regulation. Though it is unlikely to succeed, the push will force Democrats to vote either in favor or in opposition to the mandate.</p> |

Meanwhile, the federal government is expected to ask the 6th Circuit to lift the stay imposed by the 5th Circuit as the fight inches closer to the U.S. Supreme Court.

“The Sixth Circuit can either lift the Fifth Circuit’s stay or leave it in place. But if the Sixth Circuit leaves the stay in place, then the Biden administration will go to SCOTUS quickly,” Josh Blackman, a professor at South Texas College of Law, said in an email in reference to the high court.

Missouri Attorney General Eric Schmitt, a Republican, highlighted the 6th Circuit showdown as he took a victory lap Wednesday on OSHA’s decision to pause the mandate.

“OSHA announced that they would suspend enforcement of their illegal emergency temporary standard that mandates vaccines or testing on private employers,” he said. “This is a huge victory for the people of Missouri and businesses across the country, and an important step to completely halting these vaccine mandates, but there is more work to be done. Our case has now moved to the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals, and we’re optimistic that we will prevail in completely halting this vaccine mandate once and for all.”

Mr. Biden is pushing a series of vaccine mandates as he tries to fulfill his pledge to wrangle the virus and rebuild the economy. Roughly 59% of the U.S. population is fully vaccinated, and 8 in 10 eligible Americans have come forward for at least one dose, though 62 million eligible Americans remain on the sidelines.

COVID-19 cases are increasing across the country again to about 80,000 per day, and the steady drop in hospitalizations has flatlined. The delta wave that smacked the South in late summer is moving into other regions, including the Mountain West and parts of the Upper Midwest and New England.

Mr. Biden mandated vaccines for federal workers and for 17 million health care workers at providers receiving Medicaid and Medicare payments. Agencies will begin to enforce the mandate for federal workers later this month.

Under the OSHA standard, covered employers would need to take stock of which of their employees are vaccinated or not by Dec. 5. Unvaccinated employees would need to wear masks at the workplace and submit to testing at least once a week as of Jan. 4.

The OSHA regulation applies to 84 million workers. Though many of them are likely immunized already, OSHA estimates that the rule would compel 23 million people to get vaccinated.

Republicans, business groups and religious liberty advocates say the rule is an unprecedented overreach into Americans’ medical decisions and stretches OSHA’s authority over workplace safety.

Phillips Manufacturing & Tower Co., which is suing over the mandate, asked the 6th Circuit to hear the case “en banc,” meaning before a full slate of judges instead of a smaller panel.

The court is heavily stocked with Republican-appointed judges, so a full bench could help plaintiffs avoid an unfavorable panel. Still, they may want to speed up the process because the other side could make an en banc request if the court decision doesn’t go their way.

Whatever the 6th Circuit decides, “I think this is going to be resolved at the Supreme Court,” said Dan Meyer, the managing partner at the Tully Rinckey law firm’s office in Washington.

“The question is whether they see it as important enough to [rearrange] their schedule and hear it right away,” he said of the justices.

Attorneys for Phillips, which welds steel tubing and employs 104 people, said the company paid for antibody testing and found that 44 workers had produced immune responses from prior infection. They said workers tend to be physically separated while on the job, decreasing the risk of coronavirus transmission.

“Many of Phillips’s employees have declined the vaccine and are unlikely to get it even if it means the loss of their job,” the request says. “Despite extensive recruiting efforts, Phillips currently has seven openings that it cannot fill, due to general labor shortages in the local area.”

Attorneys said company employees are working overtime and averaging 10-hour shifts six days a week.

“The vaccination mandate (or its alternative of weekly daily testing) will make it even more difficult to fill the open positions,” they wrote, “let alone the new positions that will become vacant due to the workforce’s reaction to the mandate.”

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 DOD medical teams to Minnesota hospitals |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/17/defense-department-will-help-relieve-2-minnesota-h/ |
| GIST | <p>MINNEAPOLIS (AP) – The Department of Defense will send medical teams to two major Minnesota hospitals to relieve doctors and nurses who are swamped by a growing wave of COVID-19 patients, Gov. Tim Walz announced Wednesday.</p> <p>The teams, each comprising 22 people, will arrive at Hennepin County Medical Center and St. Cloud Hospital next week and begin treating patients immediately, Walz said in a conference call from the Finnish capital of Helsinki. the latest stop on his European trade mission.</p> <p>Minnesota has become one of the country’s worst hotspots for new COVID-19 infections. Hospital beds are filling up with unvaccinated people, and staffers are being worn down by the surge. Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm said Tuesday that she’s ready to expand access to booster vaccines to all adults by the end of the week if the federal government doesn’t act first.</p> <p>“Our best defense against this is the vaccine,” Walz told reporters. He noted that Minnesota is No. 2 in the country for the number of booster shots given, behind only Vermont, and that first doses have risen 60% over the last week. “And we know that that is our way out of this. ... I need Minnesotans to recognize, as we’ve been saying, this is a dangerous time.”</p> <p>Walz and Malcolm thanked U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar for helping to secure the federal teams and said they hope more will be approved for other Minnesota hospitals, which have already applied for them.</p> <p>“There’s just been a tremendous demand for those teams nationwide. At this point in time, there are very, very few teams available to be deployed across the whole nation, so the fact that Minnesota’s getting two of them is great good news,” Malcolm said.</p> <p>The governor also announced that a third skilled-nursing facility has agreed to serve as a “hospital decompression” site for patients who no longer need acute hospital care but aren’t ready to go home. Cerenity Senior Care-Marian of St. Paul will accept up to 27 patients from Twin Cities hospitals that are close to capacity.</p> <p>Ten nurses from the federal Public Health Service and 15 nursing assistants from the Minnesota National Guard and private vendors will provide transitional care. Similar sites have already been set up at nursing homes in Brainerd and Shakopee to create additional transitional care beds, which are in short supply.</p> <p>Walz renewed his calls for the Legislature to approve a series of proposals he made early last month to give hospitals and care centers more flexibility to cope with the surge. A special session needed to pass that plan, plus \$250 million in bonuses for frontline workers and drought aid for farmers, has been held up for months over a stalemate between the Republican-controlled Senate and the Democratic governor, who insists that Republicans agree not to use the session to fire Malcolm, as some have threatened.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/18 Experts: rise in cases this winter |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/18/zero-covid-experts-predict-rise-us-cases-winter |
| GIST | <p>A steep rise in Covid-19 cases in Europe should serve as a warning that the US could also see significant increases in coronavirus cases this winter, particularly in the nation's colder regions, scientists say.</p> <p>However, there is more cause for optimism as America enters its second pandemic winter, even in the face of likely rises in cases.</p> <p>Evidence shows vaccine-conferred protection against hospitalization and death remains high several months after inoculation, vaccines for children older than 5 can reduce Covid transmission, and new antiviral medications hold the promise of making Covid-19 a treatable disease.</p> <p>"I do expect to see cases increasing – we've started to see this in the last week or so," said Dr David Dowdy, an associate professor of epidemiology at Johns Hopkins University. "I don't think what we're seeing in Europe means we're in for a huge surge of serious illness and death as we [saw] here in the US," last winter.</p> <p>In the last three weeks, new cases have increased in several cold weather states across New England and the midwest. However, vaccines remain roughly 85% effective at preventing hospitalization and death.</p> <p>"Even if cases go up this winter, we're very unlikely to see the overcrowded [intensive care units] and morgues of a year ago," said Dowdy.</p> <p>Vaccine-conferred immunity against infection may allow cases to rise, he said, but far fewer people will need hospitalization. The vast majority of people who were hospitalized or died from Covid-19 this summer, more than 90% in one CDC study, were not fully vaccinated.</p> <p>"People can still get Covid, there can still be breakthrough infections, but the great news is if you have been vaccinated you are very much less likely to be hospitalized or have severe infection," said Rupali Limaye, an associate scientist at Johns Hopkins University and an expert in vaccine communication.</p> <p>Nevertheless, vaccine distribution is highly uneven across the US. Just 58.6% of the nation is vaccinated, lower than vaccination rates in some European nations now struggling with an increase in Covid-19 cases, such as in Germany and France.</p> <p>"I've been predicting a pretty bad winter wave again, and it looks like it's starting to happen," said Dr Peter Hotez, Dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine and co-director of the Texas Children's Hospital's center for vaccine development.</p> <p>"There's just too many unvaccinated and too many partially vaccinated [people]" to stop the "aggressive" Delta variant, Hotez said.</p> <p>What's more, even if the impacts of Covid-19 are dampened this winter, there still could be a devastating loss of life. A prediction from among the most respected long-term Covid-19 forecasters in the country found an additional 100,000 people may die between November 2021 and March 2022.</p> <p>"We see increasing evidence in the northern hemisphere that the expected winter surge has started to unfold," said Dr Christopher J L Murray, lead modeler at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington, as he introduced a new forecast. "Reductions in cases and new infections and hospitalizations have stopped in the US and started to turn around."</p> <p>IHME's projection, which Murray described as "optimistic," forecast 863,000 cumulative deaths from the pandemic by March 2022. Already, more than 765,000 people in the US have died from Covid-19.</p> <p>IHME's worst-case scenario predicts hundreds of thousands more deaths, for more than 1m pandemic deaths by March 2022.</p> |

“Many countries in western Europe are even farther ahead of us in the sense that the numbers are going up quite quickly in the places like the Netherlands and Denmark, but also in Germany now and a number of other countries,” said Murray. Nearly two-thirds of the 1.9m new infections globally are on the European continent, the World Health Organization said.

Further, there are few calls and little appetite to reinstate social restrictions. The promise of vaccines that could reduce transmission of Covid-19 prompted local governments around the country to drop social distancing and mask restrictions.

That trend has held even as an emerging body of evidence showed the vaccine’s ability to prevent infection with Covid-19 waned over time, and the focus of vaccine efficacy shifted to the steady protection conferred against hospitalization and death.

The risk of a “fifth wave” and waning immunity has now prompted a call for “booster” shots, or third vaccine doses, for everyone who received mRNA vaccines, those developed by Pfizer or Moderna.

The Food and Drug Administration has already authorized booster doses for people older than 65 or who work in high-risk settings. Everyone older than 18 who received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is eligible for a second dose, as evidence shows its effectiveness against serious disease may wane over time.

Booster doses are effective at increasing antibody levels, but are not the most effective way to curb transmission of Covid-19. The best way to curb transmission, experts have said repeatedly, is to get new people vaccinated. Experts now widely believe Covid-19 will be endemic and circulate for decades to come, though the severity of infection may wane over many years.

The Covid-19 pandemic may never be “over,” as many conceived early in the pandemic, Dowdy said. “The point is – when can we get this to a point where it’s tolerable to us as a society? And I think we may be closer to that point than we imagine.

“‘Zero-Covid’ is not going to happen.”

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Study: mask-wearing reduces Covid 53% |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/17/wearing-masks-single-most-effective-way-to-tackle-covid-study-finds |
| GIST | <p>Mask-wearing is the single most effective public health measure at tackling Covid, reducing incidence by 53%, the first global study of its kind shows.</p> <p>Vaccines are safe and effective and saving lives around the world. But most do not confer 100% protection, most countries have not vaccinated everyone, and it is not yet known if jabs will prevent future transmission of emerging coronavirus variants.</p> <p>Globally, Covid cases exceeded 250 million this month. The virus is still infecting 50 million people worldwide every 90 days due to the highly transmissible Delta variant, with thousands dying each day.</p> <p>Now a systematic review and meta analysis of non-pharmaceutical interventions has found for the first time that mask wearing, social distancing and handwashing are all effective measures at curbing cases – with mask wearing the most effective.</p> <p>“This systematic review and meta analysis suggests that several personal protective and social measures, including handwashing, mask wearing, and physical distancing are associated with reductions in the incidence of Covid-19,” the researchers wrote in The BMJ.</p> |

They said the results highlight the need to continue mask wearing, social distancing and handwashing alongside vaccine programmes.

Researchers at Monash University and the University of Edinburgh say multi-faceted measures, such as lockdowns and closures of borders, schools and workplaces need further analysis to assess their potential negative effects on populations.

Public health or non-pharmaceutical interventions are known to be beneficial in fighting respiratory infections like flu, and countries around the world have tried using them to curb the spread of Covid. However, until now, reviews have not been robust enough to allow experts to make firm conclusions about the effectiveness of such measures in tackling Covid.

Results from more than 30 studies from around the world were analysed in detail, showing a statistically significant 53% reduction in the incidence of Covid with mask wearing and a 25% reduction with physical distancing.

Handwashing also indicated a substantial 53% reduction in Covid incidence, although this was not statistically significant after adjusting for the small number of handwashing studies included.

Detailed analysis was not possible for other measures, including quarantine and isolation, universal lockdowns, and closures of borders, schools, and workplaces, due to differences in study design, outcome measures and quality, the researchers said.

[Mask wearing](#) was adopted by many countries at the start of the pandemic, but nearly two years later many have now dropped some or all their original requirements.

The Dutch government this month decided to re-impose the mandatory wearing of face masks in an effort to slow the [latest spike in infections](#).

Romania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland have also recently tightened rules on mask wearing. But Hungary, which has seen a sharp rise in cases this month, has resisted making mask wearing mandatory in closed spaces.

In England, the legal requirement to wear a mask ended in July, apart from in healthcare settings and care homes, unless exempt. In Wales, they are still legally required on public transport and in all public indoor areas apart from pubs and restaurants. In Scotland, masks must still be worn in shops and on public transport, and in pubs and restaurants when not seated. In Northern Ireland, masks must still be worn on public transport and in shops.

Boris Johnson, the UK prime minister came under fire this month from the World Health Organization's special envoy for Covid after being [photographed without a face covering](#) during a hospital visit.

Asked about pictures of Johnson walking maskless through Hexham General, Dr David Nabarro told Sky News: "I'm not sitting on the fence on this one – where you've got large amounts of virus being transmitted, everybody should do everything to avoid either getting the virus or inadvertently passing it on.

"We know that wearing a face mask reduces the risk, we know that maintaining physical distance reduces the risk, we know that hygiene by regular handwashing and coughing into your elbow reduces the risk. We should do it all and we should not rely on any one intervention like vaccination on its own."

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Govt. auctions off oil, gas drilling leases |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/17/biden-administration-gulf-of-mexico-oil-gas-drilling-leases |

Just four days after landmark climate talks in Scotland in which Joe Biden [vowed](#) the US will “lead by example” in tackling dangerous global heating, the president’s own administration is providing a jarring contradiction – the largest ever sale of oil and gas drilling leases in the Gulf of Mexico.

The US federal government is on Wednesday launching an auction of more than 80m acres of the gulf for fossil fuel extraction, a record sell-off that will lock in years, and potentially decades, of planet-heating emissions.

The enormous size of the [lease sale](#) – covering an area that is twice as large as Florida – is a blunt repudiation of Biden’s previous promise to shut down new drilling on public lands and waters. It has stunned environmentalists who argue the auction punctures the US’s shaky credibility on the climate crisis and will make it harder to avert catastrophic impacts from soaring global heating.

“Coming in the aftermath of the climate summit, this is just mind boggling. It’s hard to imagine a more hypocritical and dangerous thing for the administration to do,” said Kristen Monsell, senior attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity. “It’s incredibly reckless and we think unlawful too. It’s just immensely disappointing.”

Even Biden’s Democratic allies have raised concerns.

“This administration went to Scotland and told the world that America’s climate leadership is back, and now it’s about to hand over 80m acres of public waters in the Gulf of Mexico to fossil fuel companies,” said Raul Grijalva, chair of the House natural resources committee. “[The] lease sale is a step in the wrong direction, and the administration needs to do better.”

There is no guarantee that all the leases will be taken up by oil and gas companies but the Department of the Interior, which oversees public lands and waters, has estimated there is as much as 1.12bn barrels of oil and 4.2tn cubic ft of gas available for extraction. A separate lease sale offered by the government in Alaska’s Cook Inlet will offer up another 192m barrels of oil and 301bn cubic ft of gas to drillers.

Combined, these leases would result in nearly 600m tons of planet-heating gases if fully developed over the next four decades, which is more than the total annual emissions of the UK.

The sale represents a “huge climate bomb”, according to Earthjustice, one of the green groups that has lodged a lawsuit claiming it lacks a proper environmental assessment. Biden has set a target for the US to cut its emissions in half this decade before getting to net zero emissions by 2050.

Critics say a worrying pattern has emerged during Biden’s tenure, with his administration handing out drilling permits at a rate of more than 300 a month since his inauguration, a faster pace even than under Donald Trump.

At the Glasgow talks, known as Cop26, the US also declined to sign on to an agreement to end coal mining, or to phase out gasoline and diesel cars. “It truly calls into question whether the Biden administration’s climate agenda is nothing but broken promises,” said Jeremy Nichols of WildEarth Guardians, an environmental group.

Biden struck a defiant posture against the fossil fuel industry when campaigning for the White House, stating in a Democratic primary debate last year that there will be “no more subsidies for fossil fuel industry. No more drilling on federal lands. No more drilling, including offshore. No ability for the oil industry to continue to drill, period, ends, number one.”

Once in office, Biden quickly moved to realize at least part of this vision, calling a temporary halt to the issuance of oil and gas drilling permits across America’s vast publicly owned lands and ocean territory pending a review into how they are conducted.

Experts have said that the development of new oil and gas fields [must stop this year](#) if the world is to avoid more disastrous heatwaves, floods and other climate impacts, with fossil fuel production on America's public lands causing around a quarter of the country's overall greenhouse gas pollution.

However, the oil and gas industries immediately objected to Biden's move, claiming it imperiled jobs and risked pushing up energy prices, and a dozen states sued to lift the moratorium. In June, a federal judge in Louisiana agreed with the states and found that the government hadn't taken the required steps to pause new leases.

This courtroom setback has forced the Gulf of Mexico sale, according to the Biden administration. A spokeswoman for the Department of the Interior said it is "complying" with the court ruling while also appealing it and devising a better system to measure the emissions impact of oil and gas lease sales.

Jen Psaki, Biden's press secretary, said on Monday: "It's a legal case and legal process, but it's important for advocates and other people out there who are following this to understand that it's not aligned with our view, the president's policies, or the executive order that he signed."

But legal experts say the court decision doesn't, in itself, prevent the administration from stopping or delaying a scheduled lease sale, or from scaling it back.

"The Louisiana opinion doesn't force the administration to move forward with any particular lease sale – the Department of Interior still has discretion over that," said Max Sarinsky, a senior attorney at the New York University School of Law. "If they were to postpone, I'm almost certain they would be sued by oil and gas interests, but that's another matter."

To many living on the Gulf's coast, the huge expansion in oil drilling, reaching down through up to two miles of ocean into the seabed, raises concerns over a repeat of the numerous oil spills that have caused varying degrees of devastation to coastal communities and wildlife.

"That's a fear we live with," said Anne Rolfes, director of the Louisiana Bucket Brigade, an environmental group based in New Orleans. "There are spills every year and nothing is done to stop it – all the technology goes into how to drill further out, not to clean up spills or pipeline repair. The industry is like a cancer, it's just relentless growth. It's disappointing Biden won't take a firmer stance."

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| HEADLINE | 11/18 China ships block Philippines vessels |
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| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/18/chinese-vessels-use-water-cannon-to-block-philippines-vessels-from-disputed-shoal |
| GIST | <p>Chinese coastguard vessels have blocked and used water cannon on two Philippine supply boats heading to a disputed shoal occupied by Filipino marines in the South China Sea, drawing an angry protest from Manila.</p> <p>The Philippines' foreign secretary warned on Thursday that its vessels are covered under a mutual defence treaty with the United States.</p> <p>Teodoro Locsin Jr said no one was hurt in the incident in the disputed waters on Tuesday, but the two supply ships had to abort their mission to provide food supplies to Filipino forces occupying the Second Thomas Shoal, which lies off western Palawan province in the Philippines' internationally recognised exclusive economic zone.</p> <p>Locsin said in a tweet that the three Chinese coastguard ships' actions were illegal and he asked them "to take heed and back off".</p> <p>The Philippine government has conveyed to China "our outrage, condemnation and protest of the incident", Locsin said, adding that "this failure to exercise self-restraint threatens the special relationship between the</p> |

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| | <p>Philippines and China” that president Rodrigo Duterte and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, had worked hard to nurture.</p> <p>There was no immediate comment from Chinese officials in Manila or Beijing.</p> <p>The incident is the latest flare-up in the long-simmering territorial disputes in the South China Sea, where China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have overlapping claims. China claims virtually the entire waterway and has transformed seven disputed shoals into missile-protected island bases to cement its claims, ratcheting up tensions and alarming rival claimants and western governments led by the US.</p> <p>Washington has no claims in the busy waterway but has patrolled the region with its Navy vessels and aircraft to assure its allies, including the Philippines, and ensure freedom of navigation and overflight. China has repeatedly warned the US to stay away from the disputed waters and not meddle in what it says is a regional issue.</p> <p>President Joe Biden and his predecessor Donald Trump have repeatedly assured the Philippines that the US will honour its obligation under the two nations’ mutual defense treaty if Philippine forces, ships or aircraft come under attack in the long-disputed region.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Iran stockpiles weapons-grade nuclear fuel |
| SOURCE | https://www.wsj.com/articles/irans-nuclear-fuel-production-is-accelerating-u-n-finds-11637157259?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1 |
| GIST | <p>Iran’s stockpile of near-weapons-grade nuclear fuel has jumped significantly, according to a confidential report by the United Nations atomic agency that found Tehran has almost doubled its output of highly enriched uranium in recent months, putting it closer to being able to produce the fuel needed for a nuclear weapon.</p> <p>Iran had a stockpile of 17.7 kilograms (39 pounds) of 60% enriched uranium—its highest purity output so far—in early November, up from 10 kilograms in late August, meaning it is getting closer to having enough highly enriched nuclear fuel for a weapon.</p> <p>The International Atomic Energy Agency sent the findings to member states on Wednesday. The reports come ahead of the resumption of negotiations in Vienna this month on reviving the 2015 nuclear deal, a top Biden administration foreign-policy goal.</p> <p>The IAEA also reported for the first time what it called “excessively invasive physical searches” by Iran of the agency’s inspectors, describing months of exchanges with Tehran about the matter. The Wall Street Journal reported in September that there had been several incidents of physical harassment of female inspectors by Iranian security guards</p> <p>Experts say Iran would need around 15 to 25 kilograms of weapons-grade nuclear fuel for a weapon. The current stockpile of 60% enriched uranium would likely produce roughly 8 to 12 kilograms of 90% nuclear fuel—the purity needed for a nuclear weapon—depending in part on Iran’s efficiency in producing the material and the precise makeup of the current material.</p> <p>It could take Iran just weeks to enrich its 60% material to 90%, experts say.</p> <p>Iran says its nuclear program is for purely peaceful purposes.</p> <p>The latest IAEA reports show Iran will go into the nuclear talks with its stockpile of enriched uranium over 11 times what was allowed under the 2015 deal, including a large amount of 20% and 60% enriched uranium. The higher the percentage or purity of enriched uranium, the easier it is to increase the concentration.</p> |

Tehran has recently [resumed the manufacturing of centrifuge parts](#) at a site that isn't being monitored by the U.N. atomic agency, according to diplomats. The country is producing uranium metal, a material that can be used in the core of a weapon, and has significantly scaled back the IAEA's monitoring of its activities by restricting access to inspectors.

Iran has also progressed in its ability to produce more-advanced centrifuges, diplomats say, speeding the time it takes to produce enriched uranium.

Meanwhile, Iran appears to have significantly hardened its negotiating position for the nuclear talks under hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi, saying the main topic for the Vienna talks will be when the U.S. will lift all sanctions on Tehran and playing down any discussion of its nuclear activities.

The nuclear advances increase Iran's leverage in the talks, allowing it to press Washington to allow weaker restrictions on its nuclear program than set in the 2015 accord, something the Biden administration has said it won't accept.

The 2015 nuclear deal placed strict but temporary limits on Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for lifting most international sanctions. The U.S. [exited the agreement in May 2018](#) and placed sweeping sanctions on Tehran. Since then, Iran has exceeded most of the nuclear restrictions in the accord.

In one of its two reports on Wednesday, the IAEA also reported to board member states its exchanges with Iran over Iran's treatment of inspectors. Iran says problems arose because it tightened security at its nuclear sites following recent attacks on its facilities.

The IAEA said it had first raised the problem with Iran in June, and warned Iran again on Aug. 30 that "inspectors had continued to experience excessively invasive searches, which resulted in them feeling intimidated."

The IAEA told Iran at the time it would report the matter to the board if the situation didn't change. On Oct. 25, the agency wrote to Iran to say that given the continuing problems, it was now doing so.

The IAEA had told The Wall Street Journal on Sept. 14 that the agency had raised the issue with Iran. "As a result of this exchange between the agency and Iran there have been no further incidents," a spokesman said.

The IAEA confirmed in Wednesday's reports that they still hadn't gained access to the Karaj site near Tehran to restore agency cameras that Iran had removed after a June incident which Iran blames on Israeli sabotage. Israel has declined to comment on the accusation.

Production of centrifuge parts resumed at the site in late August without IAEA monitoring, and several hundred centrifuge parts have been produced there since then, with some being installed at Iran's underground Fordow site, The Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday.

The IAEA doesn't know if the site is operating, and most of the advanced centrifuges recently installed at Fordow didn't appear to come from Karaj, a senior diplomat said.

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Airlines frequent-flyer programs changing |
| SOURCE | https://www.wsj.com/articles/frequent-flier-creditcards-american-airlines-11637092275?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos5 |
| GIST | Frequent-flier programs really need a new name: Welcome to the era of the frequent-spender program. Carriers increasingly reward spending over actual flying, and American Airlines is about to push this trend farther than any big carrier. The pandemic has accelerated the transition as many formerly frequent travelers have been earning more miles and points on the ground through credit cards. |

“The pandemic gave us the opportunity to really re-evaluate how we define loyalty,” says Heather Samp, managing director of AAdvantage member engagement at American.

The airline will make it possible to earn elite status without taking a single flight starting in March. Credit-card miles will count more toward status than ever before.

Those who are true frequent fliers will get some added benefits, and business travelers who aren’t taking as many trips will be able to boost their status with their spending. Small-business owners and others who use their credit cards a lot now can be a top dog at American before they ever lift the buckle on a seat belt.

Who stands to lose? Fliers who qualify only by flying long distances on cheap tickets. Spending requirements and credit-card use become even more important.

Loyalty programs have long been geared toward business travelers who typically pay higher fares and room rates than leisure travelers. Status tiers with special perks like upgrades and priority lines drive loyalty now for business travelers.

But business travel [has remained depressed](#). That’s left airlines scrambling to figure out how to maintain status for [grounded customers](#) so they remain loyal when they do resume travel.

“I think they are all trying to figure out what their new world looks like,” says Gary Leff, a mileage expert, travel blogger and co-founder of the online community InsideFlyer.

Other airlines and hotels have made it easier to hang on to status for next year. United lowered flight and spending requirements necessary for 2022 elite status and now allows miles earned on its co-branded credit card to count toward elite status as long as you take four flights.

Delta says it will automatically roll over status that SkyMiles customers have this year to 2022. In addition, it will pool qualifying miles earned this year and next together toward 2023 status requirements. Delta is also offering bonuses to qualify for elite-status tiers faster and is counting the flying that members do on award tickets toward status levels.

Marriott, Hilton and InterContinental Hotels Group are all extending current status members have in their loyalty programs for another year and pausing points expiration until the end of next year.

Hyatt lowered qualification requirements for elite status by 50% this year, making it easier to attain status for 2022, but appears to be taking a harder line with members on keeping points current in accounts. Hyatt has been warning members that it will enforce the two-year deadline on points expiration. World of Hyatt members who haven’t earned or used points during the pandemic may face the surprise of seeing accounts wiped out.

Hyatt didn’t respond to requests for comment.

Status matters to travelers. The usefulness of loyalty programs for many road warriors isn’t the free trips with accumulated miles or points. It’s the perks that come from qualifying for elite tiers: better seat selection, early boarding, free checked bags, upgrades, priority for rebooking and standby seats, special phone numbers and priority queues at airports.

Frequent-flier programs were created in the 1980s to keep customers loyal. Miles became a hot commodity and credit-card companies now buy them by the billion to give to customers as a reward. That turned loyalty programs into a profit center for airlines instead of just a marketing cost. And that changed how airlines run the programs—they focus on spending instead of travel.

American is creating a currency called loyalty points in an attempt to simplify elite-status qualification. Previously American, like other airlines, had three requirements for status: You had to meet requirements

for mileage, number of flights taken and ticket spending. You couldn't get status with just a couple of very long, very cheap mileage runs.

Under the new rules, it's all about dollars: You'll get loyalty points for ticket spending and you'll get loyalty points for co-branded credit-card spending. American will even give priority to where members are on the upgrade list by spending.

The airline thinks the change will expand the ranks of customers with elite-level status. Often that makes upgrades even harder to score—more people in the ranks competing for few seats.

Status doesn't come cheap. Gold status on American, the lowest tier, requires 30,000 loyalty points. Each dollar spent on a co-branded credit card earns one loyalty point. Executive Platinum, American's highest published tier (Concierge Key is by invitation only), requires 200,000 loyalty points.

But Ms. Samp says the new members in the status ranks likely will be occasional fliers rather than hard-core road warriors. And that means they'll be chasing upgrades at off-peak times rather than for typical business-travel flights.

"We don't really see that adding to the ranks is going to diminish anyone's service level," she says.

The change also is likely to be a major boost for American's co-branded credit cards. Airline credit cards have seen a lot of competition from cash-back cards and high-end cards from Chase, American Express and others that offer their own lounge access, rewards on any airline or hotel and other perks.

"If you are just flying, it is going to be harder" to qualify for status on American, Ms. Samp says.

Mr. Leff notes that American isn't the first airline to offer status solely on credit-card spending. Frontier has a similar option. But American is the first huge program to fundamentally change the way status is earned, he says.

"It is a good deal for more travelers than it isn't," he says. "There will be people who are unhappy, and those are the people who would have earned higher status under the old program over the new one."

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Munich Christmas market canceled again |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/17/world/covid-vaccine-boosters-mandates?type=stylIn-live-updates&label=coronavirus%20updates&index=0#munich-christmas-market-canceled |
| GIST | <p>The Munich Christkindlmarkt, one of Germany's oldest and biggest Christmas markets, has been canceled for the second consecutive year, as another coronavirus wave sweeps through the country.</p> <p>It's the largest German Christmas market to be canceled so far, as the events struggle to survive the country's fourth virus surge after being mostly shuttered last year.</p> <p>"It is bitter news that I have today for all Munich residents, and especially for the stall owners. However, the extreme situation in our hospitals and exponentially rising infection rates leave me no other choice," said Mayor Dieter Reiter.</p> <p>Germans have gathered at outdoor markets in the weeks before Christmas since the 14th century, when vendors first built their stands in city centers to sell their wares to people coming from church services. They offer an array of foods, artisanal gifts and other provisions for the coming celebrations and the long winter months.</p> <p>Germany's roughly 3,000 Christmas markets are an important economic boon to many communities. Local restaurants, breweries, bakeries and artisans depend on the annual holiday fairs for a substantial amount of their income.</p> |

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| | <p>The Munich market is famed for its stalls offering traditional gingerbread, grilled sausages, mulled wine and hand-painted trinkets, according to Lonely Planet.</p> <p>A combination of factors has propelled Germany's latest virus surge, among them wintry temperatures, a slow rollout of booster vaccines, and an even more pronounced spike in neighboring eastern European nations like the Czech Republic.</p> <p>Experts say the unvaccinated are driving the wave of cases that are filling up hospitals across Germany.</p> <p>For the Christmas markets that remain open, only those vaccinated against the coronavirus or fully recovered from a previous infection can fully participate, Reuters reported. The unvaccinated can partake in some limited activities, such as listening to carols.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 More states broaden access to boosters |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/17/world/covid-vaccine-boosters-mandates?type=stylIn-live-updates&label=coronavirus%20updates&index=0#kansas-kentucky-maine-vermont-boosters |
| GIST | <p>Kansas, Kentucky, Maine and Vermont on Wednesday joined several states across the United States in expanding access to coronavirus vaccine boosters for all adults. That comes as federal regulators consider granting requests for Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna boosters to be authorized for all adults as early as this week, according to people familiar with the planning.</p> <p>State leaders have used various justifications for choosing not to wait for federal decisions on boosters, ranging from concerns about holiday season gatherings and winter temperatures pushing people indoors to rising cases and confusion among residents about eligibility. Federal regulators say boosters are available for adults who meet their eligibility categories and are at least six months past their second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or are two months past receiving the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccination.</p> <p>Gov. Andy Beshear of Kentucky issued an executive order that allows any adult to get a booster, provided they meet timing rules. In Kansas, Gov. Laura Kelly said that vaccine providers should allow people to determine their level of risk exposure and that the entire state was at high risk, urging all adults to get a booster. And Gov. Phil Scott of Vermont expanded booster access to all adults and said the state would simplify the online registration for state-run vaccination clinics and permit walk-in appointments.</p> <p>Citing a sustained surge in cases in Maine, Gov. Janet Mills announced that all adult residents would be eligible for a booster shot because of their high risk of exposure across the state.</p> <p>Currently, federal regulators say people who received two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines and are 65 or older, or adults who are considered to be at special risk because of their medical conditions, jobs or living environments are eligible for boosters. Anyone who received the single-dose Johnson & Johnson shot can already get a booster. Eligible people can select from any of three vaccine brands as a booster.</p> <p>The Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention has notified health care providers of the expanded eligibility for the booster shot, according to a news release from the governor's office.</p> <p>The authorities in New York City on Monday encouraged all adults to get the booster. Arkansas, California, Colorado and New Mexico have also moved to expand access.</p> <p>A growing body of early global research has shown that the vaccines available in the United States have remained highly protective against the disease's worst outcomes over time, even during the summer surge of the highly transmissible Delta variant. And there has been an ongoing debate among experts over whether extra shots are necessary for younger, healthy adults.</p> |

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| | <p>Ms. Mills justified broadening access to boosters by saying that since the entire state of Maine had seen significant spread of the virus, it qualified as the kind of high-risk environment for which federal regulators had cleared boosters.</p> <p>“With Maine and other New England states confronting a sustained surge, and with cold weather sending people indoors, we want to simplify the federal government’s complicated eligibility guidelines and make getting a booster shot as straightforward and easy as possible,” the governor said in a statement.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 NFL adds mask requirements; more tests |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/17/world/covid-vaccine-boosters-mandates?type=style-live-updates&label=coronavirus%20updates&index=0#ahead-of-thanksgiving-the-nfl-adds-mask-requirements-and-increases-testing |
| GIST | <p>The N.F.L. said Wednesday it is strengthening its Covid-19 protocols as the number of positive cases rises across the country and people make plans to gather for Thanksgiving.</p> <p>Every person, regardless of their vaccination status, must wear a mask inside team facilities between Nov. 25 and Dec. 1, and all players, coaches and support staff must be tested for the coronavirus on Nov. 29 and Dec. 1, after the Thanksgiving weekend.</p> <p>This season, unvaccinated players and staff in the league’s Tier 1 designation, the most essential personnel, must be tested every day. Those who are vaccinated must be tested at least once per week, and potentially more frequently if they are symptomatic or have a close contact with someone who tests positive.</p> <p>This update to the protocols means unvaccinated players must wait for their test results before entering a team facility, while vaccinated players and staff can enter but must remain masked while they wait for results.</p> <p>In a memo sent to all 32 teams on Tuesday night, the league also urged clubs to set up drive-through testing facilities for players, staff and any friends or family who may visit them for the holiday.</p> <p>Dr. Allen Sills, the league’s chief medical officer, said the N.F.L. was tightening restrictions because in the previous two weeks the league saw its highest number of confirmed positive coronavirus tests this season. “That wasn’t a total surprise to us because our numbers mirror the number of cases in the country,” he said.</p> <p>Between Oct. 31 and Nov. 13, there were 81 confirmed positive cases in the N.F.L., 34 players and 47 staff, the most in any two-week period this season. The players affected included high-profile starters like Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger, Los Angeles Chargers defensive end Joey Bosa, and Cleveland Browns running back Nick Chubb.</p> <p>In the prior two-week period, there were 35 confirmed positive cases, including 11 players.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Covid picture heading to Thanksgiving |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/17/world/covid-vaccine-boosters-mandates?type=style-live-updates&label=coronavirus%20updates&index=0#heres-a-look-at-how-us-virus-cases-are-looking-heading-into-thanksgiving |
| GIST | As the holidays approach, Covid-19 cases are starting to rise again. Conditions are deteriorating in the Upper Midwest and parts of the West. |

Minnesota and Michigan lead the country in recent cases per capita. Reports of new infections there increased more than 60 percent in a two-week period.

Across the country, **infection levels remain far lower** than at the peak of the summer surge. Hospitalizations and death reports have been relatively steady.

Parts of the Northeast are seeing steep increases. **Case levels have soared in Vermont**, one of the most vaccinated states, but there has not been a corresponding spike in hospitalizations.

The South, which suffered the worst outbreaks this summer, continues to average fewer cases than any other region. But after months of progress, infection rates there have started to tick upward again.

Nearly three out of five Americans are fully vaccinated. The country is administering **about 1.5 million new doses a day**, a number that has grown since booster shots and vaccines for younger children were authorized.

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| HEADLINE | 11/18 New Delhi's air turns toxic |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/18/world/asia/india-new-delhi-pollution.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage&section=World%20News |
| GIST | <p>NEW DELHI — A thick blanket of noxious haze has settled over the Indian capital of New Delhi, burning eyes and lungs, forcing schools to close and prompting ardent calls from residents for action.</p> <p>India's leaders have responded with what has become an annual tradition: by pointing fingers at one another.</p> <p>The central government, run by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is accusing city officials of inaction, and vice versa. The country's Supreme Court has stepped in to shut down factories and order farmers to stop burning fields. But the court's other efforts, which last year included ordering the installation of a pair of air-scrubbing filter towers, have been derided as ineffectual.</p> <p>The airborne murk and the towers stand as symbols of India's deep political dysfunction. The choking pollution has become an annual phenomenon, and the country's scientists can accurately predict the worst days. But deep partisanship and official intransigence have hindered steps that could help clear the air.</p> <p>New Delhi's residents don't agree who is at fault, but they agree that more must be done.</p> <p>"These last three weeks I became a refugee. I was so sick that I couldn't take it anymore," said Jai Dhar Gupta, the owner of a business that sells air pollution mitigation tools, such as home air purifier machines and face masks.</p> <p>Mr. Gupta, who now lives between Delhi and Mussoorie, a city in the foothills of the Himalayas that boasts better air, became an antipollution activist and entrepreneur in 2013, after developing asthma.</p> <p>"It's really sad for a nation where every time there is a health emergency the Supreme Court needs to intervene. That tells you everything about the apathy toward the health and life in our country," said Mr. Gupta. "Nobody cares."</p> <p>The court stepped in over the weekend in response to a petition filed by an 18-year-old environmental activist and after the city had endured pollution levels comparable to levels generated by major wildfires. It criticized officials for what it called their "don't take any step" position.</p> <p>Earlier this week, Delhi's emergency measures went into effect. Construction activity, diesel generators and trucks were banned. Schools were closed and employers were asked to keep half of their staffs at home. Six power plants outside New Delhi were ordered shut down.</p> |

Under pressure from the court, city officials also deployed other steps that have inspired more jokes than optimism. They include anti-smog guns that create artificial mist, fire trucks to douse the streets with water and chemical dust suppressants.

“These are hardly measures,” said Bhavreen Kandhari, a member of Warrior Moms, a group of mothers lobbying for cleaner air. “These are reactions, knee-jerk reactions. Till you have the political intent, you know nothing is going to happen.”

Broadly, India’s air quality suffers from its appetite for fossil fuels, which has only grown after two decades of rapid economic growth. Last year, [India was home to 15 of the 20 cities with the most hazardous air globally](#), and health experts have detailed how such conditions can lead to [brain damage](#), respiratory problems and early death.

Weaning the country off coal and other dirty fuels will be difficult, a reality underscored by climate negotiations that took place in Glasgow, Scotland, this month. India already struggles to meet its basic power needs. During the Scotland talks, India and China teamed up to insist upon a last-minute amendment to the language of the accord, to “phase down” coal rather than ease it out.

Mr. Modi argues that India’s increasing use of coal and other fossil fuels is helping build an economy that is lifting millions out of poverty. But emissions from burning coal make the pollution problem worse for city dwellers, particularly the poor, who [cannot afford](#) air purifier machines or the electricity to run them.

Cities also suffer from growing car emissions and the fires that the poorest residents burn to cook food and keep warm, especially when colder weather hits in November. New Delhi’s air quality takes a particular hit from the burning of crop stubble by farmers in the neighboring states of Punjab and Haryana. The bad air settles over the Indo-Gangetic plain of northern India, trapped on either side by the Thar Desert and the Himalayas, forming a toxic stew.

Mr. Modi’s government says that Delhi, which is run by an opposition political party, has failed to enforce its own pollution-reduction policies, such as a limit on vehicular traffic on days when pollution surges. Earlier this week, [Adesh Gupta](#), the Delhi president of Mr. Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party, said that Delhi’s top elected official, Arvind Kejriwal, should resign.

“Instead of making Delhi a world-class city as he claimed, Kejriwal has made it a smog city,” Mr. Gupta said.

Delhi officials in turn say Mr. Modi’s government has failed to persuade farmers in nearby states to stop [clearing their fields](#) with fires.

“Farmers in neighboring states are compelled to burn stubble as their governments are doing nothing for them,” Mr. Kejriwal said.

The Supreme Court stepped in last year, too, ordering the two sides to take steps like enforcing a ban on farm fires and capturing power plant emissions. It also ordered Delhi early last year to build the two experimental smog towers, despite experts’ doubts about their impact. A [study](#) last year in the peer-reviewed journal *Atmosphere* called the approach unscientific.

“Can we vacuum our air pollution problem using smog towers? The short answer is no,” the researchers said.

Still, they are a tempting refuge for people desperate to escape the city’s bad air.

As a coppery sun set behind smoky skies, Jasmer Singh rested under a smog tower in central Delhi as it sucked in polluted air. A monitor measuring the levels of dangerous particulate matter showed that the air it spit out was slightly cleaner, but far from what the World Health Organization considers safe.

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| | <p>Still, Mr. Singh, a volunteer at a nearby Sikh temple said, “around here, the air is good, lighter and better.” Some members of both Mr. Modi’s party and the opposition say they want to take a serious, nonpartisan look at the problem.</p> <p>“The blame game will be always there,” said Vikas Mahatme, a lawmaker with the B.J.P. Summing up the attitudes of many politicians, he said, “Why one should bother about other states? They are not voters to consider.”</p> <p>Still, getting all sides to work together will be difficult, he acknowledged. “We are not very active,” he said. “I tell you freely.”</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Study: Calif. heat waves impact fires |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/17/climate/climate-change-wildfire-risk.html?surface=most-popular&fellback=false&req_id=998564370&algo=combo_EI_bandit-all-surfaces-time-cutoff-20_setnthitem_0_news_typekoftopn_2_5_news_diversify&variant=3_EI_combo_bandit-all-surfaces_20s_guardrails_pool_hp_1d_no_opinion_diversified&pool=pool/249abdc7-aea7-4629-b2ef-a1f76cddbde&imp_id=636563408&action=click&module=Popular%20in%20The%20Times&pgtype=Home_page |
| GIST | <p>The hottest summer days in the Sierra Nevada in California greatly increase the risk that wildfires will ignite or spread, and as the planet keeps warming the risks will increase even more, scientists said Wednesday.</p> <p>The research, which examined daily temperatures and data from nearly 450 Sierra Nevada fires from 2001 to 2020 and projected the analysis into the future, found that the number of fires could increase by about 20 percent or more by the 2040s, and that the total burned area could increase by about 25 percent or more.</p> <p>The findings “show how short events like heat waves impact fires,” said Aurora A. Gutierrez, a researcher at the University of California Irvine and the lead author of a paper describing the work in the journal Science Advances. “We were able to quantify that.”</p> <p>As for the projections over the next two decades, she said, “We are getting hotter days and that’s why the risk of fires is increasing into the future.”</p> <p>Wildfires are increasing in size and intensity in the Western United States, and wildfire seasons are growing longer. California in particular has suffered in recent years, including last summer, when the Sierra Nevada experienced several large fires. One, the Dixie Fire, burned nearly a million acres and was the largest single fire in the state’s history.</p> <p>Recent research has suggested that heat and dryness associated with global warming are major reasons for the increase in bigger and stronger fires.</p> <p>The findings of the new study are generally in keeping with that earlier research, but there is an important difference. Most earlier studies looked at temperature and other data aggregated over monthly to annual time scales. The new research looked at daily data.</p> <p>“What makes this novel is that we were trying to identify the role of individual temperature extremes on individual dates,” said Jim Randerson, the senior author on the paper and a UC Irvine professor of earth systems science.</p> <p>Over the past 20 years, the researchers found, a 1 degree Celsius (1.8 degree Fahrenheit) increase in mean summer temperature increased the risk of a fire starting on a given day — either by human activity or a lightning strike — by 19 to 22 percent, and increased the burned area by 22 to 25 percent.</p> |

Dr. Randerson gave an example of why extremely hot weather can lead to more, and more easily spreading, fires.

“If it’s a normal day, say 80 degrees Fahrenheit, and you accidentally create a spark and there’s an ignition, you can probably stomp on it, or local fire agencies can come and put it out,” he said. The vegetation still contains a significant amount of moisture that the heat from the fire must evaporate first. That slows the spread of flames.

But on a 100-degree day, Dr. Randerson said, the vegetation is so dry, with so little moisture to evaporate, that a fire spreads quickly, and grows.

“You get rapid expansion,” he said, “and eventually a fire so big it can last for weeks and weeks.”

John Abatzoglou, who studies the influence of climate change on wildfires at the University of California, Merced, said the work “adds to the growing scientific literature of climate-driven fire potential in forests of the West.”

“The observed and projected upward march in temperatures is compounding pre-existing conditions, namely fuel accumulation in our forest, to escalate fire risk,” said Dr. Abatzoglou, who was not involved in the study.

The researchers used meteorological data, averaged over the region, and fire data from two sources: California’s [Department of Forestry and Fire Protection](#), which records with precision when fires begin, and [sensors on two NASA satellites](#) that can measure fire spread on a daily basis.

For Ms. Gutierrez, who worked in Dr. Randerson’s laboratory while an undergraduate at Irvine and full time there after receiving her undergraduate degree in 2018, that meant wrangling a deluge of data over many months.

But researching the link between daily extreme temperatures and wildfires was worth it, she said.

“We decided this is a question we need to ask,” Ms. Gutierrez said. “And yes, it’s a bit tedious with the amount of data we’re having to process, but it’s an important question.”

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 EU new sanctions against Belarus |
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| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/17/world/europe/the-eu-adopts-new-sanctions-against-belarus.html |
| GIST | <p>European Union foreign ministers have adopted new sanctions on the government of Aleksandr G. Lukashenko, the Belarus leader, who has already been sanctioned for fraud in claiming a sweeping re-election victory in August and for a subsequent harsh suppression of dissent.</p> <p>The new sanctions, approved by European governments on Monday, would target “individuals and entities organizing or contributing to activities by the Lukashenko regime that facilitate illegal crossing of the E.U.’s external borders,” according to the European Commission, the bloc’s executive bureaucracy.</p> <p>A list of those to be hit by asset freezes and travel bans under the new sanctions is expected to be finalized in coming days. Likely to be targeted are more than two dozen Belarusian officials; a Syrian airline, Cham Wings, for having transported migrants to Belarus; the Hotel Minsk in the Belarus capital, for housing migrants; and possibly Minsk airport, according to E.U. officials.</p> <p>“Today’s decision reflects the determination by the European Union to stand up to the instrumentalization of migrants for political purposes,” said the E.U. foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell Fontelles. “We are pushing back on this inhuman and illegal practice.”</p> |

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| | <p>The European Union has called Mr. Lukashenko's efforts "a hybrid attack," saying that he has encouraged migrants to fly into Belarus from countries like Syria and Iraq with the express purpose of sending them on to the European Union in retaliation for the earlier sanctions.</p> <p>The new sanctions will have to undergo legal vetting by the European Commission before being implemented and coordinated with Britain, Canada and the United States, which could take several weeks.</p> <p>The growing numbers of migrants at the Kuznica-Bruzgi border crossing, which has raised fears of further tragedy and confrontation between the two governments, appeared to be a response by Mr. Lukashenko to the meeting of the E.U. foreign ministers. Mr. Lukashenko has vowed to retaliate against fresh sanctions, though his main supporter, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, has chastised him for threatening to cut off supplies of the Russian natural gas that flows through his country to Europe.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Protesters disrupt world largest coal port |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/11/17/coal-protesters-shut-down-australia-port-abseil/ |
| GIST | <p>Two young women scaled a huge coal handling machine shortly before dawn on Wednesday, disrupting operations at the world's largest coal port for several hours to protest what they say is Australia's lack of action on climate change.</p> <p>"My name is Hannah, and I am here abseiled off the world's largest coal port," 21-year-old Hannah Doole declared on a live-streamed video as she hovered high over massive piles of coal bound for export. "I'm here with my friend Zianna, and we're stopping this coal terminal from loading all coal into ships and stopping all coal trains."</p> <p>Since officials met in Glasgow, Scotland, earlier this month to plot the planet's path away from fossil fuels, Australia, the world's second-biggest coal exporter, has showed little sign of changing course. Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Monday said the coal industry will be operating in the country for "decades to come."</p> <p>When he agreed last month to go carbon-neutral by 2050, the man who once brought a lump of coal into Parliament promised that his plan — which was short on details and long on speculative technology — would not crimp coal exports nor cost miners their jobs.</p> <p>In the face of that apparent lack of urgency from government, protesters are increasingly taking matters into their own hands. A string of protests has disrupted the Port of Newcastle and surrounding railroads in the past two weeks, prompting police to establish a strike force to crack down on the high-profile stunts.</p> <p>The protesters, from an activist group called Blockade Australia, plan to converge on Sydney, the commercial capital, in June next year, bringing the city to a halt.</p> <p>"This is us responding to the climate crisis. This is humans trying to survive," Doole said on Wednesday. "We are trying to induce the social tipping points, which will give us a chance at another generation," she remarked on camera, pausing to laugh ironically, before adding: "What a wild thing to want."</p> <p>'This is us responding to the climate crisis'</p> <p>Despite the progress made at the COP26 climate summit, optimism about the agreement hangs on whether countries will actually deliver on the promises made in Glasgow. Coal production in China, the world's largest consumer of coal, has surged to the highest levels in years as the country addresses power outages.</p> <p>Matt Kean, the environment minister for New South Wales state, speaking on Sydney radio 2GB on Wednesday, said police need to "throw the book" at anti-coal activists, describing their dramatic stunts as "completely out of line."</p> |

On Monday, another protester locked herself to a railway line leading to the port, preventing coal cars from entering. On Tuesday, two activists strapped themselves to another piece of coal-loading machinery. They hung in the air for several hours before being arrested.

Interfering with a railway or locomotive with the intention of causing a derailment can result in prison sentences up to 14 years, police said, while other possible charges carry jail terms of up to 25 years. A local police minister described the protests as “nothing short of economic vandalism.” (A spokeswoman for the Port of Newcastle said other operations at the port were continuing, beyond the rail lines and coal-loading facilities.)

Doole and Zianna Faud, 28, were arrested and taken to a local police station about 9 a.m. local time. The live-streamed video showed authorities approaching on a metal gangway above the protesters, who were suspended on ropes below, with a police officer appearing to read them their rights.

According to a spokeswoman for the activist group, Faud appeared before Newcastle magistrates court on Wednesday, where she faced charges of hindering the working of mining equipment, which carries a maximum sentence of seven years imprisonment, and entering enclosed lands. She pleaded guilty and was given community service and a roughly \$1,090 fine, and ordered not to associate with her co-accused, Doole, for two years.

Doole and three other activists were refused bail and will be seen by the court tomorrow.

“We are running rings around the police and the push back shows that direct action is effective,” Faud said in a statement following her release.

In the video, Doole said she considered the dangers before the protest — imagining herself running across piles of coal with police helicopters in pursuit. Then, she thought back to the time, a couple of summers ago, when thousands of Australians fled from their homes as wildfires raged and skies turned blood red. She and her family hunkered down in their property as towns around them burned.

“Getting chased by a police helicopter, that’s not fun. ... But you know what scares me more?” she said. “I just think back to that New Year’s Eve, when I thought I was going to die in a fire, caused by climate change. And that’s the barest glimpse of what’s going to happen.”

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| HEADLINE | 11/16 King Co. crisis responders struggle |
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| SOURCE | https://crosscut.com/news/2021/11/king-county-crisis-responders-struggle-backlogs |
| GIST | <p>It’s the last option for people in crisis: commitment to a hospital. But with the onset of new rules regulating use of force in Washington state, police have pulled back from this work, leaving designated crisis responders mostly without the option to detain those they believe to be a threat to themselves or others.</p> <p>When combined with the stresses of COVID-19, people and their families are now waiting days or even weeks to get mental and behavioral help in numbers that government officials and advocates say are the worst backlogs they’ve ever seen.</p> <p>In King County, the number of people queued up for responses is more than double what’s typical, stretching the capacity of workers and leaving families in the lurch. In Snohomish County, crisis responders are fielding more referrals from jail rather than their preferred source, the community. And in Pierce County, individuals found in need of hospitalization are struggling to obtain safe transportation.</p> <p>Taken together, crisis responders often find themselves in a time warp, holding seemingly the same conversations with desperate and confused families who are unsure where else to turn. The responders tell the families that they’re doing what they can.</p> |

Designated crisis responders serve a specific role in Washington state, which is to evaluate when an individual should be committed to a hospital for inpatient psychiatric treatment. It's a bar that's met when someone is found to be a threat to themselves or others or "gravely" disabled.

While the responders are the ones to do the evaluation and seek commitment, they often rely on police to detain and transport an individual unwilling to go voluntarily. But since new laws governing the use of force took effect statewide, designated crisis responders report a breakdown in that system. Police officers, they say, are less willing to engage with people in a mental health crisis — a disputed interpretation of what the law says, but one having a real-world impact nonetheless.

In Seattle, for example, police are transporting significantly fewer people in crisis to the hospital.

"There's definitely been a change, there's been an impact," said Kelli Nomura, director of the King County behavioral health and recovery division.

In King County, the team of designated crisis responders was already stretched by COVID-19. Many service providers shuttered their doors and pulled back on face-to-face outreach with clients, leaving those at risk of spiraling into crisis without a safety net.

But since July, when the law took effect, crisis responders have seen caseloads spike and significant backlogs form. Without a good option for transporting someone to the hospital, both emergency and nonemergency cases are languishing. Typically, the crisis responder team has between 50 and 60 open cases, said Frank Couch, King County's involuntary commitment act coordinator. Now, they average nearly 120 and never dip below 100.

"I would say that there's probably more cases on there than any time previous to this," Couch said.

That backlog leaves crisis responders with less latitude to respond to community evaluation requests.

"We are weeks out from even being able to evaluate someone, which is unreal," said one designated crisis responder, who asked to remain anonymous. "We've never had that before." The result, said this person, is that untrained family members often bear the burden of managing their loved one's crisis.

"It's hard to go from one call with a deeply upset and depressed and hopeless individual and pick up the phone again and it's the same call, just a different scenario in a different city," the person said.

Without early intervention, responders worry that individuals in crisis will decompensate to the point where they're either arrested or cause significant harm to themselves or others.

"I think from what we've seen, our folks have languished until we figure out a workaround or keep calling because the situation is escalated enough for [the Seattle Police Department] to respond," said Jesse Benet, former deputy director of the Public Defender Association.

The designated crisis responder who spoke to Crosscut provided a list of nearly 30 occasions in which an officer would not intervene in a call they may previously have done. In some instances, the individuals went on to hurt themselves or others.

It's a common refrain.

"We've had, unfortunately, some pretty sad cases in which we find them to be meeting criteria, but the person just flees or eventually assaults somebody and they end up in jail," said Silvia Riley, director of crisis services with Multicare in Pierce County.

Carola Schmid, Snohomish County crisis services supervisor, said that the services are seeing an "incredible spike" in referrals for mental health evaluations in jail, rather than from the community.

“We’re going back to criminalizing mental illness, it seems,” she said.

The legislation limits the use of force to instances when there’s probable cause for an arrest and to prevent someone under arrest from escaping. Force is also allowed when there are threats of bodily harm to the officer, the subject or anyone else in the area.

Its backers, including the American Civil Liberties Union of Washington, said it should not restrict when officers respond to behavioral health crises or their ability to put hands on someone who’s a threat to themselves or others. The Involuntary Treatment Act specifies instances in which force is allowed to detain someone in crisis.

State Sen. Jaime Pedersen, D-Seattle, said specifically calling out detentions for involuntary treatment would have been precarious. “It’s not as if in the real world it’s super easy to draw a bright line between the people who are potential [involuntary treatment] candidates and the rest of the world and say, ‘the rest of the world, here are de-escalation procedures and if you’ve got a credible reason to use [involuntary commitment], then you can go ahead and use whatever force you want to,’ ” he told Crosscut in September.

But Steve Strachan, executive director of the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, said he hopes that’s just what the Legislature does next year. The need to find better alternatives for behavioral health crises is a point of “universal” agreement, he said, but, as things stand now, each county and city police department is receiving different advice on how they should engage, causing confusion without sufficient alternatives.

“Part of the issue is that we sort of did this backward,” he said. “The behavioral health system — ideally that infrastructure would have been built first.... We’re in a period now where we have to iron out and amend issues.”

Nomura of King County said there’s a need for both long- and short-term investments. The goal is always to prevent people from falling into crisis in the first place. At the same time, there are not enough crisis responders to keep up with the backlog.

“People are out there languishing and families are out there languishing and of course they feel like we should be able to do something more about that,” said King County’s Couch. “The problem is, we’re not first responders. There’s only so much we can do of our own accord.”

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Flooded communities start cleanup |
| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/weather/flooded-communities-in-northwest-washington-start-cleanup-as-rivers-slowly-recede/ |
| GIST | <p>Neighbors across Northwest Washington state will turn their labors toward repairing their communities Wednesday after swollen streams flooded lowland towns and carried filthy storm water into Puget Sound.</p> <p>An estimated 75% of homes in Sumas sustained water damage, a dozen train cars derailed, and electric power stopped in what officials from the border town of 1,300 people called a devastating event. City Hall is full of water. Highway 9 and its Canadian border crossing remained closed.</p> <p>More than 500 rescues and evacuations were reported in the Sumas area, including stalled motorists. Gov. Jay Inslee and Whatcom County Executive Satpal Singh Sidhu issued disaster declarations that should help steer aid to damaged areas.</p> <p>“Our hearts are heavy today, especially for the family members who are still trying to locate their loved ones. Heavy for the hundreds of Whatcom County residents that were forced to leave their homes as</p> |

water seeped through the doors and for those who may have to leave today,” said an update by state legislators Sharon Shewmake and Alicia Rule.

Electricity has been restored in most of Sumas and the town is ready to start repairs Wednesday morning, Mayor Kevin Christensen said Tuesday evening.

“We’re looking at going door-to-door, as waters go down in different parts of town,” he said. “Half is on dry ground, half has water.”

To defend against future flooding, he suggests dredging nearby streams, which he said have become shallower due to silt deposits from past floods. There’s precedent in the state’s [Swift Creek Project, to remove naturally occurring asbestos](#) from mountainside run off, reducing a public health hazard. On the other hand, he acknowledged, silt removal would fan debate about whether it aids or harms native fish.

Other options could include a giant diverter, though water volumes, Christensen said, are likely too great for it to work. A levee or trench could redirect flood water or a detention site could be built — though it would remove valuable farmland, he said.

Unlike Monday, when people were evacuated using about 20 boats, the water was too shallow for boat evacuations Tuesday. Rescuers fanned out in about 10 pieces of farm machinery. Christensen said he personally joined a crew using a front-end loader to bring people out of wet homes.

“The biggest thing for me was together with volunteers and first responders, rescuing people who had five feet of water in their house. The look on their face was worth it,” he said.

Evacuated residents were staying at temporary shelters including the Nooksack Valley High School south of town, between Sumas and Everson.

Mostly clear skies are predicted for the next several days, said National Weather Service meteorologist Mike McFarland. A possible quarter-inch of rain could fall late Thursday, but that’s hydrologically insignificant after the region endured two “atmospheric rivers” of rain, he said.

Nearly all waterways, including the mighty Skagit River that wraps around Mount Vernon, crested by Tuesday morning. That city’s [\\$30 million flood protection wall](#) — where workers insert aluminum beams to make the [promenade’s brick fence](#) higher — saved the downtown overnight from near-record flooding.

However, [the Skagit flood warning remains in effect](#) until Thursday night, because massive volumes of water in the Cascades and foothills will take a while to drain. Dams on the Skagit controlled significant runoff “but with the reservoirs near maximum pool levels, that water must start being released,” the warning says.

“Bad things can still happen,” McFarland said. “It’s too early to relax if you’re anywhere around the Skagit and the Nooksack rivers.”

The Skagit relented from its [early-Tuesday peak of 36.9 feet at 5 a.m.](#), just shy of the record 37.4 feet in 1990. Water elevation declined to 36.2 feet by 2:15 p.m. Tuesday, still eight feet over flood stage. It’s expected to recede to 30 feet by Wednesday afternoon and normal by the weekend.

Mount Vernon got a scare Tuesday morning when a bulge appeared in a dike along Riverbend Road, just west of I-5, and officials briefly issued an evacuation order. The city reopened Division Street Bridge late Tuesday afternoon.

In Bellingham, which absorbed 4 1/2 inches of rain in 36 hours, most city streets reopened by mid-Tuesday. Iowa Street near Interstate 5 remained closed, along with Squaticum Way in the north end.

Iowa Street was still inundated by Lake Whatcom and Whatcom Creek, deep enough for stand-up paddleboarders to travel. Trails near streams remained unstable, the parks department said.

The city was still calculating damage to public and private property. “We are grateful no lives were lost to flooding and falling debris,” [Bellingham Mayor Seth Fleetwood](#) said in a statement.

Crews continued to search into Tuesday evening for a [person who went missing after being seen in Whatcom County floodwaters](#). In Bellingham, a motorist was injured by a falling tree.

Interstate 5 reopened through Ferndale around 2 p.m., after standing water blocked traffic near Main Street. Mudslides kept northbound I-5 blocked along Lake Samish south of Bellingham for most of Tuesday, but all lanes at Nulle Road reopened Tuesday night.

Puget Sound Energy reported 25,239 customers still without power late Tuesday afternoon. [Outages are clustered](#) along the Skagit River, Whidbey Island, the Sumas area and around Olympia.

[The governor’s emergency weather proclamation](#) Monday extends to Clallam, Grays Harbor, Island, Jefferson, Lewis, King, Kitsap, Pierce, Mason, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Thurston, and Whatcom counties.

In British Columbia, one person was confirmed killed by a mudslide north of Vancouver, while 7,000 people were ordered to evacuate the interior city of Merritt when floods inundated the sewage treatment plant, [CBC reported](#).

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Canada sends military to help in floods |
| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/canada-sending-military-personnel-to-help-with-bc-floods/ |
| GIST | <p>VANCOUVER, British Columbia — The Canadian government said Wednesday it is sending the air force to the Pacific coast Canadian province of British Columbia to assist with evacuations and to support supply lines following floods and mudslides caused by extremely heavy rainfall.</p> <p>Minister of Emergency Preparedness Bill Blair said they will also protect residents against further flooding or landslides. Military helicopters already helped evacuate about 300 people from one highway where people were trapped in their cars overnight Monday following a mudslide,</p> <p>“Torrential rains have led to terrible flooding that has disrupted the lives and taken lives of people across B.C. I want people to know that the federal government has been engaging with the local authorities,” Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said in Washington. “We’re sending resources like the Canadian Armed Forces to support people but also we’ll be there for the cleanup and the rebuilding after impacts of these extreme weather events.”</p> <p>Every major route between the Lower Mainland of British Columbia and the Interior has been cut by washouts, flooding or landslides following record-breaking rainfall across southern British Columbia between Saturday and Monday.</p> <p>The body of a woman was recovered from one of the mudslides caused by extremely heavy rainfall and the mudslides have destroyed parts of several major highways.</p> <p>The total number of people and vehicles unaccounted for had not yet been confirmed. Investigators had received reports of two other people who were missing but added that other motorists might have been buried in a slide on Highway 99 near the town of Lillooet.</p> <p>Elsewhere in the province, Abbotsford Mayor Henry Braun said residents of the low-lying Sumas Prairie area south of the city face a significant risk to life and must get out immediately.</p> |

An evacuation order was issued for about 1,000 properties Tuesday as flooding linked to a severe weekend rainstorm pushed up water levels in the area which is home to many large dairy farms and other agricultural and livestock operations.

Braun said in a news briefing Wednesday that conditions were dire overnight because a key pumping station was in danger of being overwhelmed. The station was the only thing keeping water from the nearby Fraser River from engulfing most of the Sumas Prairie flats, he said.

“Right now, things are holding steady,” Braun said of the situation at the Barrowtown Pump Station. Crews spent Tuesday night sandbagging around the station.

“I’m feeling much better today than last night,” he said, although he cautioned the danger has not passed and river levels, which have dropped two meters since the storm ended, must drop further before flood gates can be opened to allow even more water to escape.

Abbotsford Fire Chief Darren Lee said about 180 rescues were completed Tuesday and early Wednesday as trapped residents asked for help to leave their flooded properties.

“Overnight we actually brought in additional helicopters when we realized the flooding was worsening in the east Prairie area,” he said. Three helicopters carried people to safety overnight, said Lee, while 11 teams in boats also brought out trapped residents.

No one was unaccounted for, said Abbotsford Police Chief Mike Serr.

About 80 callers were still awaiting help by daylight and responders planned to “work through the queue” through the morning, he said.

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Thanksgiving items running out of stock |
| SOURCE | https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/17/business/thanksgiving-out-of-stock/index.html |
| GIST | <p>New York (CNN Business)If you've been noticing emptier shelves when shopping for Thanksgiving, you're not alone. But you won't have to cancel Thanksgiving.</p> <p>In the week ending November 7, retailers were running lower on stock of essential Thanksgiving items compared to the same time last year, according to IRI, a market research firm that tracks US retail sales.</p> <p>During that first week of November, whole bird frozen, fixed-weight turkeys were in stock at a rate of 64% on average across national retailers, IRI found. This time last year, that figure was around 86%. IRI data didn't include seasonal fresh turkey. Last week, many Americans who were buying turkey early were buying frozen birds.</p> <p>Availability of packaged pie was roughly 68% that week, compared to 78% in 2020. Liquid gravy, with an in-stock rate of 73%, is down about 12 percentage points compared to last year. Cranberry sauce, with 79% availability, is down from 89% in that same period.</p> <p>IRI uses point-of-sales data and e-commerce transactions to track weekly store stock rates. Retailers typically like to have around a 95% in-stock rate overall, noted Krishnakumar Davey, president of IRI's strategic analytics practice. This year, stores aren't anywhere close to that.</p> <p>A number of factors are contributing to Thanksgiving staples disappearing from store shelves — including supply chain ruptures and an unexpected spike in demand.</p> <p>But if you haven't done your shopping yet, don't panic. You may spend more than you'd like and have to make some substitutions.</p> |

Supply chains woes and early shoppers

Manufacturers and grocers say [supply chain disruptions](#) and [high demand](#), both throughout the year and ahead of the holiday, have contributed to barer shelves.

Ocean Spray, a farmer co-operative that makes cranberry sauce and sells bagged cranberries, said that "consumers may experience some availability issues at times on a variety of cranberry products," because of supply chain issues. The co-op noted that it doesn't expect "significant impacts" on the availability of its products.

And SpartanNash ([SPTN](#)), a food distributor that also owns grocery stores, has been having a hard time stocking a number of Thanksgiving items, said CEO Tony Sarsam. "There's probably ... a half a dozen classic holiday items that'll be tougher to find this year," he noted, including turkey, pie, frozen pie shells, liquid gravy and cranberry sauce.

Sarsam has had problems with other ingredients, including cream cheese, which is popular among [home bakers](#) and shows up in a lot of Thanksgiving recipes, he noted, like whipped cream and butterscotch chips.

Flavored chips, such as butterscotch and peanut butter, have been in high demand and have run into supply chain disruptions this year, according to Allison Kleinfelter, a Hershey ([HSY](#)) spokesperson. "There may be some places where shelves run low or run out during the holiday baking season," she said.

Kleinfelter noted that "the production of our chocolate chips (milk, dark and semi-sweet) is strong and tracking with consumer demand. "

Cream cheese is another item that has been harder to find ahead of the holiday.

Kraft Heinz ([KHC](#)) has seen "unprecedented demand for Philadelphia Cream Cheese in the past year," said Jenna Thornton, a spokesperson for the company. "We expect to see that trend hold over the holidays and plan to ship roughly 30% more Philadelphia product in November and December," she added.

One thing you should be able to find without a problem: Stuffing. IRI data shows that in-stock rates for stuffing mixes were at 92% in the first week of November, up from 90% in the same period last year.

'A Thanksgiving of alternatives'

So what happens if, or when, you can't find the food you want, or haven't started your shopping yet? Don't stress too much — you'll probably be able to find what you need.

But you may not get exactly what you want, and [don't count on finding any deals](#). While in years past retailers or product manufacturers may have tried to incentive sales with promotions close to the holiday, given that supply is low and demand is high, that's unlikely to happen this year, IRI's Davey said. And you may have to go with a different brand than the one you were looking for.

"If you're particular about some things, then you may or may not find them on your shelf," Davey said. "That's the key takeaway." Davey said he doesn't expect out of stocks to get worse as we get closer to the holiday.

Some constraints have already eased, according to IRI data. In-stock rates for frozen, fixed-weight turkeys grew to 64% in the first week of November, up significantly from 40% in the last week of October.

Butterball has noticed that "whole turkey sales have been early and brisk, which potentially accounts for the reported out-of-stocks," said Christa Leupen, a company spokesperson. "We can affirm that there will be Butterball turkeys available in stores this season," she said.

Cargill, also a [major turkey processor](#), is "confident that there will be an ample supply of turkeys for Thanksgiving this year throughout the US," said Daniel Sullivan, a spokesperson for the company, even as it has had to make certain adjustments to production this year.

Stew Leonard Jr, CEO of the small grocery chain Stew Leonard's, said that he's having trouble stocking some branded products. But he's been able to make substitutions so that shelves aren't empty.

"I would say this is a Thanksgiving of alternatives," he said. "I can't guarantee our customers that they will have every single item they want," he added. "But I can guarantee that they will have an alternative to what they want."

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Mystery: TSA ready for Thanksgiving? |
| SOURCE | https://www.forbes.com/sites/suzannerowankelleher/2021/11/17/tsa-thanksgiving-mystery/?sh=31f3b8da70b0 |
| GIST | <p>A week before Thanksgiving eve, one of the busiest travel days of the entire year, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is facing an even more pressing deadline. Next Monday, November 22, is the date by which all federal employees must either be vaccinated against Covid-19 or submit to frequent coronavirus testing, per President Joe Biden's vaccine mandate.</p> <p>The agency has not given an update on compliance since October 13, when TSA Administrator David Pekoske told CNN that "about 60% of our workforce has been vaccinated, that that number needs to go quite a bit higher over the next few weeks."</p> <p>November 8 was the last date that still-unvaccinated TSA employees could get the one-dose J&J shot and be considered "fully vaccinated" two weeks later, in time to meet the November 22 deadline.</p> <p>The TSA is not saying how much the compliance needle has moved in the past five weeks. "While we can't share data yet, we do not anticipate any disruptions because of the vaccination requirements," a TSA spokesperson said via email. "The compliance rate is very high, and we still do not have full data yet."</p> <p>But yesterday on Capitol Hill, concerns were raised over the TSA's readiness for Thanksgiving weekend travel. Everett Kelley, president of the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents 700,000 federal workers, including TSA's 45,000 employees, told a panel of the House Homeland Security Committee that the union was calling on President Biden to "align the vaccine deadline for federal employees with the deadline for federal contractors" and push back the date to January 4, 2022.</p> <p>Kelley told the panel that he did not know how many TSA officers were fully vaccinated at this time, but that a number of officers have sought religious and medical exemptions for getting vaccinated.</p> <p>Like other frontline workers, many TSA employees have a greater exposure to the coronavirus. There are currently 271 TSA employees with active Covid-19 infections, according to the agency's website. In the first two weeks of November, TSA employees at 59 airports across the country have reported new infections. Since the beginning of the pandemic, 11,117 TSA employees have tested positive for Covid-19. In addition, 32 TSA employees and two screening contractors have died after contracting the virus.</p> <p>A potential shortage of TSA employees couldn't come at a worse time. Air travel is rebounding, with airport checkpoint screenings up to roughly 85% of pre-pandemic passenger levels, according to Transportation Security Administration (TSA) throughput data. The AAA is projecting that 4.2 million Americans will fly over Thanksgiving weekend, roughly double the number that flew last year but down 11% from pre-pandemic levels.</p> |

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| | <p>Last month, Pekoske said TSA was “building contingency plans” for a scenario in which it saw staffing shortages as a result of the mandate.</p> <p>But Kelley said that airport lines over the holidays will be long for reasons that have nothing to do with the mandate. He told the congressional panel that many TSA employees are leaving their jobs for a variety of reasons, but mainly due to “low pay and difficult work environments.”</p> <p>“The long wait lines are just going to be there,” Kelley said, “because of the fact that there’s such a high turnover and the fact that we’ve not done an exceptional job in making sure that the workforce was replenished.”</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Belarus standoff unlike migrant crises |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/article/belarus-poland-border-migrants.html |
| GIST | <p>A crowd of migrants trying to cross a border has come to seem appallingly familiar in recent years. We have seen masses of desperate people seek refuge in strange lands: Syrians escaping civil war, the Rohingya brutally driven from Myanmar, Afghans fleeing Taliban rule.</p> <p>But the standoff at the border between Belarus and Poland, where thousands of migrants are camped in a freezing forest — and several have died — differs sharply from those crises in its origins, relative scale and implications.</p> <p>A Manufactured Emergency</p> <p>First, this appears to be an orchestrated crisis, created by Aleksandr G. Lukashenko, Belarus’s autocratic ruler, to cause trouble for the European Union.</p> <p>Belarus allows little in the way of independent news media or political opposition. Lukashenko’s claim last year to have won re-election with 80 percent of the vote was widely seen as a farce, and hundreds of thousands of people protested.</p> <p>The authorities suppressed the demonstrations with force. In response, the E.U. imposed sanctions on Belarus, which is not a member of the union, and Mr. Lukashenko dearly wants them lifted.</p> <p>In recent months he has allowed in thousands of visitors who want to reach the much freer, wealthier countries of Western and Northern Europe. That means first getting into one of the E.U. member countries that border Belarus — Poland, Lithuania or Latvia.</p> <p>The number of people flowing through Belarus grew sharply in August, most of them Afghans. It surged in the past month with people from Iraq and Syria, many of them ethnic Kurds.</p> <p>Mr. Lukashenko and his government deny deliberately using migrants to unsettle the E.U. — while repeatedly threatening to do just that. But the evidence is compelling, starting with the country’s liberal granting of visas to people with one-way airline tickets to Minsk, the Belarusian capital.</p> <p>Some migrants have reported being taken to the E.U. borders by the Belarusian authorities, who have urged — or even forced — them to cross. They say these authorities gave them wire cutters to breach fences, helped tear down barriers and prevented them from returning to the cities.</p> <p>Playing Into European Politics</p> <p>As many as 4,000 migrants at a time have been camped at the Polish border, aid groups estimate, and there are perhaps 10,000 to 20,000 over all in Belarus — far fewer than the millions who fled Syria or the million forced out of Myanmar.</p> <p>But the numbers are more than enough to set off tensions in Europe, where the politics of migration are raw. This is as much a political crisis as a migration one.</p> |

The right-wing governing party in Poland has long called non-European migrants a threat to Polish culture and sovereignty, and its response to the current situation has been predictably heated. It describes the conditions as an attack by Belarus, and has deployed thousands of troops to keep migrants out.

In 2015-16, more than a million people, primarily Syrians, poured into Europe. The resulting backlash buoyed right-wing nationalists across the continent, and ever since, mainstream politicians have been loath to embrace immigration.

Six years ago, some countries, notably Germany, welcomed migrants, while others, including Poland, refused to accept more than a few, clashing with E.U. leaders. But there was no danger of armed conflict between them.

Now, no one is offering to take the migrants, even as they suffer through life-threatening conditions. The E.U. is united behind Poland, which is portraying itself as the first line of defense for the bloc, and Warsaw and Minsk have traded ominous threats.

Migrants, but Not Always Refugees

Many of the Middle Easterners in Belarus are economic migrants who do not appear to qualify as refugees, though that does not make the danger they face — at least 11 have died in the cold — any less real.

International accords define refugees as people with legitimate fears of violence or persecution, and give them a right to asylum. Many people in the migrant flood of 2015-16 were fleeing wars.

The repressive governments in Syria and Afghanistan still pose a severe threat to many of their people, but the wars there have quieted and Iraq is relatively secure.

But many of the people now in Belarus left Iraq and Syria seeking economic opportunity. They would not qualify for asylum.

The Polish and Lithuanian authorities have reportedly abused migrants, forcing them back into Belarus without hearing their asylum claims, which rights groups say violates international law. Now the migrants are trapped in a potentially lethal clash.

“We became like a chicken in a cage in the hands of Belarusian and Polish police,” Bayar Awat, an Iraqi Kurd stuck at the border with his wife and infant daughter, said in a telephone interview.

“One of them won’t let us go back to Minsk and the other won’t let us in,” he added.

A Shroud of Secrecy

In contrast to many migrant crises, it has been all but impossible for outsiders to fully know what is happening.

Poland and Lithuania have barred journalists and human rights groups from the borders, which include some of Europe’s wildest regions and few remaining primeval forests.

Belarus also kept reporters away for weeks, but has begun giving them limited access, presenting itself as the humanitarian actor and Poland as the villain.

The Polish authorities are engaged in a cat-and-mouse game with migrants along the roads and dirt tracks that run through the woods on their side of the border. Anti-immigrant sentiment in the region is strong; activists who try to help migrants have found their cars smashed.

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| | <p>Even so, aid groups and individuals have gone into the forests and villages just outside the two-mile-wide exclusion zone from which the Polish authorities have barred all nonresidents. They hang bags with food, water and other supplies from tree limbs for migrants to find.</p> <p>But they rarely see those they are trying to help, only the traces they leave behind — food wrappers, former campsites, paperwork in Arabic, and even a boarding pass for a flight from Damascus, Syria, to Minsk.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/16 IG: DOJ needs to prove it's 'not politicized' |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/16/justice-department-needs-prove-it-not-politicized-/ |
| GIST | <p>The Justice Department watchdog says the department needs to prove to the public that it is not politicized.</p> <p>In a report released Tuesday, Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz said public discourse questioning the department's objective application of law is "concerning."</p> <p>Mr. Horowitz cited recent high-profile examples of the FBI failing to follow internal policies designed to protect the agency "from accusations of political influence or partial application of the law" — including the bureau's heavy reliance on false statements in the Trump-Russia collusion investigation and former FBI Director James B. Comey's media leaks.</p> <p>The missteps, he said, have "negatively impacted the perception of the department as a fair administrator of justice."</p> <p>The inspector general also cited public reports claiming "political considerations allegedly influenced the department's decision to obtain communications of members of Congress and the media, accusations that lawful protestors were cleared from Lafayette Square for political purposes, as well as claims that some Department officials may have sought to take action to alter the outcome of the 2020 election."</p> <p>Public perception surrounding the events has "crystalized the urgency" for the department to show the public that it is free from political influence by adhering to and strengthening its policies related to objectivity and impartiality, he said.</p> <p>The report also mentions a 2020 survey by the Pew Research Center that showed the public ranked the Justice Department as one of the lowest-regarded federal agencies.</p> <p>The survey asked 1,013 Americans to rank 10 federal agencies based on favorability, and the Department of Justice came in ninth, after the Immigrations and Customs Enforcement agency. Pew noted that the view of the department was sharply divided based on political affiliation.</p> <p>"While the overall favorability rating of DOJ has increased since its low point in 2015, the data suggests a concerning trend: the political affiliation of the survey respondents seemed to affect their view of the department," Mr. Horowitz said.</p> <p>The report cites other "urgent" challenges facing the department faces, including the rising danger of homegrown violent extremism, improving community trust in police and preventing cybersecurity attacks.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 LAPD fake social media to surveil citizens? |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/17/los-angeles-police-surveillance-social-media-voyager |
| GIST | <p>The Los Angeles police department pursued a contract with a controversial technology company that could enable police to use fake social media accounts to surveil civilians and claimed its algorithms can identify people who may commit crimes in the future.</p> |

A cache of internal LAPD [documents](#) obtained through [public records requests](#) by the Brennan Center for Justice, a non-profit organization, and shared with the Guardian, reveal that LAPD in 2019 trialed social media surveillance software from the analytics company Voyager Labs.

Like many companies in this industry, Voyager Labs' software allows law enforcement to collect and analyze large troves of social media data to investigate crimes or monitor potential threats.

But documents reveal the company takes this surveillance a step further. In its sales pitch to LAPD about a potential long-term contract, Voyager said its software could collect data on a suspect's online network and surveil the accounts of thousands of the suspect's "friends". It said its artificial intelligence could discern people's motives and beliefs and identify social media users who are most "engaged in their hearts" about their ideologies. And it suggested its tools could allow agencies to conduct undercover monitoring using fake social media profiles.

The LAPD's trial with Voyager ended in November 2019. The records show the department continued to access some of the technology after the pilot period, and that the LAPD and Voyager spent more than a year trying to finalize a formal contract. The documents show that the LAPD has had ongoing conversations this year about a continued partnership, but a police spokesperson told the Guardian on Monday that the department was not currently using Voyager.

The LAPD declined to respond to detailed and repeated inquiries on its trial with Voyager and its conversations about a potential long-term contract, as well as questions about its use of social media surveillance software.

The department has said in the past that social media can be critical for investigations and for "situational awareness" in monitoring major events for potential public safety issues. The city has seen large demonstrations in recent years, as well as clashes between activists over issues such as vaccination requirements.

But experts who reviewed the documents for the Guardian say they raise concerns about the LAPD's pursuit of ethically questionable software. The department's surveillance technology could be violating civilians' free speech and privacy rights, the experts say, while facilitating racial profiling.

The full scope of the LAPD's surveillance tech is unclear, though [records suggest](#) that the department has in recent years purchased or considered buying software from at least 10 companies that monitor social media. The department is often a trailblazer among US police departments in adopting new technologies, with a large police budget and private foundation funding that allows it to trial programs later adopted by other departments.

The concerns come after the Guardian recently revealed that the LAPD has been directing officers to broadly [collect social media information](#) of civilians they stop and question, including people who are not cited or arrested, and amid [growing scrutiny](#) of the department's surveillance and "predictive policing" practices.

'Bigotry embedded in code'

Voyager – registered as Bionic 8 Analytics – gave the LAPD some of its products on a trial basis in the summer and fall of 2019, the records show.

The documents don't make clear what suite of tools the LAPD had access to during the trial or whether the department used some of the company's more controversial features. But a report the company produced for the LAPD during this period says the department used the company's software to investigate more than 500 social media profiles and to analyze thousands of messages. The redacted report said the LAPD had used the software for "real-time tactical intelligence"; "protective intelligence" for "VIPs" in local government and in the LAPD; and cases related to gangs, homicides and hate groups. An unnamed LAPD investigator was quoted in the report as saying Voyager helped the department "identify a few new targets".

In internal messages about the pilot in 2019, the LAPD said Voyager was especially helpful in analyzing social media data obtained through warrants and in investigating online networks of “street gangs”.

Communications between Voyager and the LAPD after the trial ended and when the company was trying to sell the department on its products reveal more about the firm’s purported capabilities, claims experts said were bold and troubling.

In the spring of 2020, while pitching a contract, Voyager provided the LAPD with case studies illustrating how the software had been used.

In one example, the company said its software had been used to investigate a Muslim Brotherhood activist in New York City who allegedly made a video encouraging people to intentionally spread Covid to Egyptian government officials in March 2020.

A Voyager representative told the LAPD the investigation was conducted for “federal and local agencies” but did not name the clients or specify whether the threat had turned out to be legitimate. But Voyager said its software was able to collect and analyze thousands of the activist’s social media posts and had scooped up data on 4,000 of his “friends”.

Voyager also said its software was able to discern which social media users caught up in the search were “top connections” of the activist and that it could determine who was based in New York and who worked for a government agency. The company claimed the software could also discern which of the accounts showed an “affinity” for “violent, radical ideologies” based on “indirect connections” to “extremist accounts”, appearing to refer to friends of friends.

In another presentation, Voyager suggested its software could not only collect large amounts of social media data but that its “artificial intelligence” could discern people’s beliefs.

Voyager showed LAPD how its software could have been used to investigate an alleged terrorist attack, analyzing the case of Adam Alsahli – a man killed after he opened fire at the Corpus Christi naval base in May 2020. Pointing to the man’s social media activity, Voyager claimed its AI could ascertain people’s “affinity for Islamic fundamentalism or extremism”. The company cited the shooter’s “pictures with Islamic themes” and said his Instagram accounts showed “his pride in and identification with his Arab heritage”. The company said its AI was so effective that its results, produced in minutes, did not “require any intervention or assessments by an analyst or investigator”.

In an October 2020 proposal document, Voyager also said its software could conduct a “sentiment analysis” to discern who was most emotionally invested and had the “passion needed to act on their beliefs”.

Voyager’s monitoring of broad online networks, and its claims about AI, raised red flags for experts.

“There’s a basic ‘guilt by association’ that Voyager seems to really endorse,” said Rachel Levinson-Waldman, a deputy director at the Brennan Center, about Voyager’s New York City case study. “This notion that you can be painted with the ideology of people that you’re not even directly connected to is really disturbing.”

The naval base shooting example was deeply troubling, said Meredith Broussard, a New York University data journalism professor and expert on AI, who reviewed the records for the Guardian. “Just because you have an affinity for Islam does not mean you’re a criminal or a terrorist. That is insulting and racist. It’s religious bigotry embedded in code.”

“This is hyperbolic AI marketing. The more they brag, the less I believe them,” said Cathy O’Neil, a data scientist and algorithmic auditor, arguing that the firm’s broad claims were not based in legitimate science

and were unachievable: “They’re saying, ‘We can see if somebody has criminal intent.’ No, you can’t. Even people who commit crimes can’t always tell they have criminal intent.”

The consequences of this pseudoscience can be dire, she added: “Claims of accuracy don’t have to actually be true for the algorithm to be used as a weapon.”

Concerns about undercover spying

The documents show Voyager and LAPD officers also discussed some of the company’s most controversial proposals. In an October 2020 letter to the LAPD outlining details of a potential contract, Voyager claimed its social media monitoring was “traceless”, saying that the social media companies themselves would not be able to tell that LAPD was behind the surveillance.

In an earlier report to LAPD in 2019, Voyager said it was developing software to spy on WhatsApp groups using an “active persona mechanism”, or “avatar”, suggesting that police would create a fake account to collect information from a group.

In one September 2019 email to a Voyager sales representative, an LAPD technology official said the feature that allows police to “log in with fake accounts that are already friended with the target subject” was a “great function”, but added that the department was not heading in the direction of using that service.

It’s unclear if the LAPD ever used the fake account feature. In another September 2019 email, an LAPD official in the robbery and homicide division told Voyager that the “avatars” function was a “need-to-have” feature. And Voyager said in one document that some LAPD staffers piloting its services had requested the “active persona” feature for Facebook, Instagram and Telegram.

This feature could violate the policies of Facebook, which prohibits fake accounts and has previously deactivated users that it determined were police officers impersonating civilians. A Facebook spokesperson said members of law enforcement, like all users, were required to use their real names on their profiles.

“As stated in our terms of services, misrepresentations and impersonations are not allowed on our services and we take action when we find violating activity,” a Facebook spokesperson, Sally Aldous, said in a statement.

Using fake accounts to monitor activists online was equivalent to undercover spying, civil rights advocates said.

LAPD has policies for “online undercover activity” that establishes some restrictions for this tactic, including requiring special approval from a supervisor if police are using a fake account to communicate with someone, but there is less oversight if an account is created to examine “trends” or for “conducting research”.

John Hamasaki, a criminal defense lawyer and member of the San Francisco police commission, said some police departments were updating policies to restrict the use of fake accounts in an effort to protect free speech. In San Francisco, he said, police would be barred from using a company like Voyager for broad surveillance of online networks. The type of predictive policing software that Voyager advertises is also strictly prohibited in Oakland, according to the city’s privacy commission.

“The problem with these types of surveillance operations is they’re often not based on reasonable suspicion or probable cause,” he said. “Instead, it is casting a broad net.”

Levinson-Waldman of the Brennan Center said it was unclear how widespread this kind of surveillance was in police departments across the US. She noted that while law enforcement departments were increasingly relying on social media in investigations, there was often little transparency.

The LAPD and the New York police department have two of the largest police budgets in the country and have a long history of piloting cutting-edge technology that ends up being ineffective or harmful, said Broussard, the author of *Artificial Unintelligence: How Computers Misunderstand the World*.

Even when the LAPD or NYPD cease using certain products, the companies end up bringing their tech elsewhere, she said: “The companies still want to sell software, so they go after smaller police forces that have even less capacity to evaluate the efficacy of these snake-oil software systems.”

Recent reporting has shown how the LAPD has used surveillance [technology similar to Voyager’s to monitor Black Lives Matter](#) organizing, and the department also recently said it was pursuing this kind of technology for “information gathering” in a [report](#) about reforms since the George Floyd protests. The LAPD did not respond to questions from the Guardian about whether Voyager was used for monitoring protesters.

In a report in September of this year, the department said it was “currently using” Voyager software and seeking \$450,000 to purchase additional Voyager technology. But an LAPD spokesperson said this week that the department was not using the company’s software at the moment. She did not respond to questions about when LAPD ceased using the services and if the department was still pursuing a partnership.

Voyager declined to comment on its work with the LAPD and did not answer specific questions about its services. A spokesperson, Lital Carter Rosenne, said its clients were responsible for building databases and running the software, adding: “As a company, we follow the laws of all the countries in which we do business. We also have confidence that those with whom we do business are law-abiding public and private organizations.”

LA activists said the revelations raised serious concerns about how the tech could be used against groups that protest against the LAPD. “I’m really astounded that not only is LAPD using these companies, but that there are these tactics which feel very much like digital infiltration,” said Dr Melina Abdullah, a co-founder of Black Lives Matter LA. “It demonstrates that our fears are true.”

Abdullah, who had not heard of Voyager Labs, said she was particularly disturbed to learn about potential monitoring of WhatsApp groups: “We know that our public posts are monitored. But when they’re engaging in additional digging into private posts, that is supposed to be a more secure way of communicating.”

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Nurses salaries rise: demand for services |
| SOURCE | https://www.wsj.com/articles/nurse-salaries-rise-as-demand-for-their-services-soars-during-covid-19-pandemic-11637145000?mod=hp_lead_pos11 |
| GIST | <p>Nurses are winning raises worth thousands of dollars a year from hospitals, the latest employer reckoning with a tight labor market.</p> <p>HCA Healthcare Inc., HCA 1.77% one of the nation’s largest hospital chains, increased nurse pay this year to handle heavy Covid-19 pandemic case loads and keep pace with rivals that are also trying to fill vacancies and hold on to existing staff, the company’s human resources chief said. Raises varied by market; an HCA spokesman declined to say by what amounts.</p> <p>Other hospitals say they have raises in the works to keep up with competitors’ offers. A small Missouri hospital desperate for nurses this month raised nurse salaries by up to 5% after hospitals nearly 40 miles away boosted wages.</p> <p>“We were forced to,” said Sarah Hanak, chief nursing officer at Citizens Memorial Hospital in Bolivar, Mo. “We absolutely have to stay competitive.”</p> |

The average annual salary for registered nurses, not including bonus pay such as overtime, grew about 4% in the first nine months of the year to \$81,376, according to healthcare consultants Premier Inc., which analyzed salaries of about 60,000 nurses for The Wall Street Journal.

That is up from the 3.3% increase in average annual nurse wages in all of 2020 and 2.6% growth the year before the pandemic, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

The nation's \$1 trillion hospital sector is among the U.S. economy's largest to be [squeezed by upheaval across its workforce](#) and strong demand for services following rollout of vaccines and an economic rebound. Similar disruption across sectors in retail, transportation and hospitality [is also raising their workers' wages](#) and job prospects.

Nurses have played a critical role during the pandemic, tending to Covid-19 patients flooding emergency rooms and filling hospital beds, in addition to their work with more typical patients.

The need for nurses has risen so high that many have been able to make even better livings by leaving hospital payrolls and instead [hopping between temporary jobs](#) seeking emergency staffing, hospital recruiters and executives say.

The changes have pushed up turnover and job openings at hospitals, leading to chronic staffing shortages as Covid-19 cases keep coming and many patients who had postponed care for other conditions seek treatment.

"We are employing more nurses now than we ever have, and we also have more vacancies than we ever had," said Greg Till, chief people officer at Renton, Wash.-based Providence health system, which operates 52 hospitals across seven states largely in the Western U.S.

Nurse turnover rates have increased to about 22% this year, compared with an annual rate of around 18% in 2019, the last year before the pandemic, says Premier.

For many hospitals, higher labor costs threaten to crimp already tight margins. As a result, some may curb services to tighten expenses, or seek [higher prices from health insurers](#) to help cover the additional labor costs.

Nurses, meanwhile, have been able to take advantage of their increased clout. Some have secured more flexible work schedules, according to recruiters, nurses and hospital executives.

The Providence system, which has raised some nurses' wages to keep their salaries competitive, is offering nurses more time off and greater schedule flexibility to combat burnout, new career development opportunities and other nonsalary perks to attract and retain staff, Mr. Till said.

Other nurses have advanced their careers faster than they would have, employers say. And they say new graduates, who once needed experience and training before hospitals would hire them to work in the operating room or perform other specialized roles, are now a growing share of new hires. Hospitals are doing more on-the-job training as a result.

"I think you get to write your ticket," said Tessa Johnson, president of the North Dakota Nurses Association.

Jefferson Health, which has 18 hospitals in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, raised salaries 10% for its nearly 10,000 nurses in May after the system found rivals had increased compensation, said Kate FitzPatrick, who became the system's chief nurse executive in January. "The circumstances required it," she said.

Some new recruits out of nursing schools, seeing Jefferson's salary offers, have asked, "Are you sure that's not a typo?" said recruiter Tierra Seay. Yet others have rejected the offers as too low and didn't take a job with Jefferson, she said.

Nurse Stephanie Fernandez entered the job market this spring, using LinkedIn.com to notify prospective employers. Recruiters eagerly contacted her, including temporary-agency recruiters who tracked down her phone number and called out of the blue, she said.

"Everybody and anybody wants you," Ms. Fernandez said. She chose Jefferson, where she now cares for transplant patients, because of its Philadelphia location and because its salary offer beat out other potential employers, she said. She declined to give her salary.

Citizens Memorial, the southwestern Missouri hospital, raised salaries for all nurses by up to 5% this month after minimum-wage increases made by rivals in the larger city of Springfield forced Citizens to up the hourly wages of custodians and kitchen staff.

Citizens didn't want newly hired nurses to leave because the gap between their salaries and minimum wage had narrowed, Ms. Hanak said.

Now, Citizens is trying to make sure it has enough nurses to fill overnight shifts. To do so, Ms. Hanak said she has asked the hospital's chief executive to give nurses who work night shifts an increase of about 15% an hour.

It also may soon need to boost nurse wages again because Mercy health system, which owns one of the Springfield hospitals, is reviewing nurse salaries at rival hospitals every six months to stay competitive, said Betty Jo Rocchio, Mercy's chief nursing officer.

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Holiday season travel: test airlines, airports |
| SOURCE | https://www.wsj.com/articles/holiday-season-will-show-if-airlines-have-done-enough-to-tame-unruly-passengers-11637154001?mod=hp_listc_pos1 |
| GIST | <p>The holiday travel season starting next week will test whether airlines, regulators and airports have done enough to combat a sharp rise in unruly passenger behavior and ease tensions for travelers.</p> <p>There have been 5,114 reports of unruly passengers this year as of Nov. 9, according to the Federal Aviation Administration, and more than 970 investigations have been initiated. In 2019, the FAA initiated fewer than 150 investigations into passenger behavior.</p> <p>Among the incidents, a Southwest Airlines operations agent was transported to the hospital last weekend after a female passenger allegedly punched her, Dallas police said.</p> <p>Close to three-quarters of reports to the FAA are of mask-related incidents, according to the agency. In several cases, incidents that began as a dispute over mask policy have spiraled.</p> <p>Unruly passenger incidents can have a significant impact on airline staff and travelers alike—they can result in delayed flights or unplanned trips back to the gate, for one, and have resulted in serious injuries to airline staff. Flight attendants say they are concerned their uniforms will make them targets of a violent attack. High-profile incidents also stoke broader anxiety about travel.</p> <p>"We went from telling everyone to be separated by 6 feet or more to packing them back into airplanes," said Andrew Thomas, an associate professor of marketing and international business at the University of Akron, who has written books about air rage and aviation security.</p> <p>Bad behavior on planes is nothing new. There was a rise in poor comportment on planes in the late 1990s, Mr. Thomas said. Things briefly improved after the 9/11 attacks, but the trend eventually resumed.</p> |

This time around, Covid-19 worries, new rules in airports and on planes, and rising numbers of delayed and canceled flights, have raised travelers' stress, Mr. Thomas said. Expected crowds for [holiday flights](#) stand to strain nerves further.

Carriers including [Delta Air Lines](#) Inc. and United Airlines Holdings Inc. say they expect the Thanksgiving period to include some of their busiest days since the start of the pandemic, with travel volumes down just 11% to 12% from 2019. Both carriers said that the Sunday following the holiday is on pace to set a pandemic-era record.

Jaina Mistry said she plans to take a Southwest flight from her home in Phoenix to San Francisco with her husband on Tuesday to spend Thanksgiving with her brother-in-law. Ms. Mistry, 37 years old and a senior manager of email marketing, flew frequently before the pandemic, but this will be her first flight since March 2020.

She said she feels a little apprehensive about the trip after seeing news of [airlines canceling scores](#) of flights in October and because Southwest passengers don't reserve seats in advance. She plans to wear her mask as federal law requires and hopes her fellow passengers do the same.

"I'm just going into it hoping it all goes well," she said.

The FAA and flight attendants say alcohol has played a role in many incidents. FAA regulations already prohibit passengers on flights from consuming alcohol that isn't served by airlines. This summer, the FAA asked airports to ease up on sales of to-go alcoholic drinks. Some airlines suspended alcohol sales in coach cabins to avoid contributing to problems.

FAA officials also got creative, enlisting their children to help film a [public service announcement](#). This week, the FAA is shooting another video along with the Transportation Security Administration, airlines and airports. The new message aims to remind passengers of the real people—crew members, airport workers, and others—who make it possible for them to go home for the holidays.

While the agency has proposed hefty fines for those who act out on flights, a high percentage of travelers who have incurred penalties have been able to show that they don't have the financial assets to pay the full amounts, officials said. The FAA can't prosecute criminal cases, though it recently [referred about three dozen cases](#) to the Federal Bureau of Investigation and has asked airports to coordinate more closely with local law enforcement.

The problem may be worse than numbers suggest. Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, said many incidents where passengers are rude, dismissive or make racist comments don't get reported.

The Transportation Security Administration offers a crew member self-defense training program run by federal air marshals, but it is voluntary. In testimony submitted to a House subcommittee for a hearing on Tuesday, Ms. Nelson said crew member self-defense training must be made mandatory.

Flight attendants are resilient, Ms. Nelson said, but "when it's at this level and there's also the added stress of the frequency of violence, the name calling and insults carry a different kind of weight."

Hoping to help law enforcement and airlines, and curtail incidents, Salt Lake City International Airport has volunteered to pay the expenses for any crew or passengers returning to the area to serve as a witness or as a charging complainant, said executive director Bill Wyatt.

The airport made this decision in October, and so far no action has been necessary.

"We think it's important that people who are unruly to the point of committing a crime don't get off the hook simply because no one wants to charge them because of the expense of returning here," he said.

At United Airlines, the number of incidents has declined since early this year, Brett Hart, the airline's president, told reporters earlier this month. Passengers are growing accustomed to new procedures and airline flight attendants are skilled at de-escalating situations, he said.

Passengers who witness these incidents shouldn't get involved unless the flight attendant directs them to or unless there is immediate life-threatening danger, said Ms. Nelson. All passengers are encouraged to alert flight attendants to potential issues.

"With minimum staffing we may not see it as soon as other passengers," Ms. Nelson said.

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 NHL team 100% vax; then 40% test positive |
| SOURCE | https://www.wsj.com/articles/ottawa-senators-covid-11637123408?mod=hp_listc_pos3 |
| GIST | <p>A substantial Covid-19 outbreak that this week has sidelined the National Hockey League's Ottawa Senators—despite the entire team being vaccinated—carries a warning for the coming months of professional sports: even with blanket immunization, pandemic disruptions are far from over.</p> <p>The NHL announced the suspension of the Senators' season through at least Nov. 20 after 10 players and one coach tested positive in recent days. The team says it is fully vaccinated, but hasn't specified which shots players have received.</p> <p>After nearly two years in which sports have delivered some of the most vivid case studies in public health, the Senators are presenting yet another: just how much Covid can still spread when a vaccinated group of people gather in poorly ventilated places and get up in each other's bare faces. That's a problem for every sport that plays indoors—and a warning for every coming holiday party.</p> <p>The outbreak has sent the Senators off the ice to the longest Covid-related sports hiatus since vaccines became widely available and leagues persuaded nearly all of their players to get vaccinated.</p> <p>Even in a league with a 99% vaccination rate, breakthrough cases on the Senators have now infected more than 40% of the roster. Yet epidemiologists say they are not particularly surprised. They have long warned that while vaccines are highly effective in preventing serious illness from the coronavirus, they're not as foolproof in blocking infections, especially as time passes, immunity fades and the highly contagious Delta variant spreads—especially when other preventive measures are not also in effect.</p> <p>"It's hockey, it's not like you're going to have masking, distancing, ventilation working in your favor at all times," said Isaac Bogoch, a University of Toronto infectious diseases specialist who is a consultant for the National Hockey League Players Association.</p> <p>He added: "We can see the effectiveness of the vaccines are slightly waning with time and it's real, but we have to remember it's waning against getting the infection — the vaccines are holding a lot of their strength against severe illness."</p> <p>The problem isn't just that hockey is played without face-coverings, six-feet-apart stickers and opened windows. The NHL and other leagues have also peeled back the heftier testing regimens that they deployed in the pre-vaccination era. Fully vaccinated players are only required to take a PCR test every third day, while unvaccinated players must continue doing so daily. Vaccinated players need only take daily tests if they are identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive; unvaccinated players can be sent into quarantine.</p> <p>Professional hockey played its first pandemic season inside a bubble akin to the National Basketball Association's Disney "campus setting." It's no coincidence that the two most prominent indoor professional sports in America chose a form of lockdown to be able to play on inside, while football and baseball soldiered on outdoors though found themselves struggling with indoor activities such as dining.</p> |

Actually, hockey went one step further than basketball and made a “double bubble” for its 2020 playoffs. Players were not only in a sealed environment with limited contact with people from the outside world, but that outside world happened to be communities in Canada with very low rates of Covid cases.

Outside of that bubble, there were rich examples of how easily the virus could spread inside an ice rink. In a paper published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Florida health officials recounted [a June 2020 recreational hockey game](#) in Tampa Bay during which a presymptomatic but infectious player appeared to have transmitted coronavirus to eight out of 10 teammates, five out of 11 players from the opposing team, and one rink staff member.

“The ice rink provides a venue that is likely well suited to Covid-19 transmission as an indoor environment where deep breathing occurs, and persons are in close proximity to one another,” the authors wrote. “The high proportion of infections that occurred in this outbreak provides evidence for SARS-CoV-2 transmission during an indoor sporting activity where intense physical activity is occurring.”

[Finnish researchers found](#) an asymptomatic carrier of Covid-19 in an under-20 team had infected 22 of 28 teammates, that another 24 players from two opposing teams the under-20s had just played tested positive in the next two weeks, and since some of those players were training with senior teams, an additional three infected players were detected.

The Senators’ outbreak for now presents only a minor scheduling headache for the NHL, which must now squeeze two additional games into the remaining 23 weeks of the regular season. That’s a bit harder to do in 2022 than most years, as the NHL is taking a three-week hiatus in February to allow players to represent their countries at the Beijing Winter Olympics.

Bogoch said that his prescription for hockey was to “carry on carrying on,” he said. “When you think about how contagious Delta is, how many games have been played... all things considered, it’s going OK.”

He said he saw no need for a return to the bubble, but he also didn’t want to see hockey drop all testing and just let players spread infection.

“A bubble I don’t think is reasonable at this point in time; nor is pretending that the pandemic is over.”

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Push: suppliers to disclose climate data |
| SOURCE | https://www.wsj.com/articles/companies-push-suppliers-to-disclose-more-climate-data-11637145001?mod=hp_minor_pos7 |
| GIST | <p>Companies are pressing their suppliers to disclose data on greenhouse-gas emissions amid a struggle to more precisely account for something that’s hard to quantify: their pollution.</p> <p>Companies with targets to achieve net-zero emissions—including retailer Tractor Supply Co. , laboratory supply firm Agilent Technologies Inc. and others—say they are asking suppliers to provide climate data and nudging them to improve their carbon footprints, with some ultimately threatening to order elsewhere. Companies across industries are facing pressure from investors and regulators to show the steps they are taking to go green.</p> <p>Sixty-five companies in the S&P 500 had net-zero targets in place as of Oct. 31, prior to the COP26 Summit, according to data provided by Jefferies Financial Group Inc. Many companies announced targets around the time of the two-week summit in Glasgow, at which more than 190 countries agreed to accelerate greenhouse-gas reductions.</p> <p>Not all corporate net-zero goals are the same. Companies typically pledge to reduce emissions from their operations and energy purchases, but some omit one of their largest sources of pollution: their supply</p> |

chain. Such emissions are referred to in carbon-accounting parlance as Scope 3, a category that also includes pollution from the goods a company produces and other indirect sources.

Companies have limited visibility into the amount of pollution created across their supply chain, finance and sustainability executives said. Some executives cite the challenges involved with measuring Scope 3 emissions as a key reason for not committing to a reduction target. But not disclosing Scope 3 emissions data and targets can be a risk, as well, particularly in heavily emitting industries where investors want to see proof that companies understand the business risk of not adapting to a low-carbon economy, finance and sustainability executives said.

Brentwood, Tenn.-based Tractor Supply for example chose not to include Scope 3 emissions in its net-zero target announced in September, choosing instead to focus on carbon from its own operations. “We can take care of our house,” said Kurt Barton, Tractor Supply’s chief financial officer, speaking about the company’s emissions goals, which involve hitting net-zero by 2040.

Tractor Supply has made progress in recent years toward going green, reducing emissions from its operations by 3% in 2020 from a year earlier, even as it added 79 new stores with 2.1 million square feet of retail space, according to the company. The company does its own carbon-emissions calculations and also has a third-party firm review its data. Its internal audit division is in charge of verifying climate accounting methods, according to Tractor Supply.

The company plans to set a Scope 3 emissions-reduction target in the near future and currently has internal models of its Scope 3 emissions, Mr. Barton said. “We don’t want that target to be ill-defined or arbitrary,” he said. The company plans to ask its suppliers for information on carbon emissions starting next year. It is developing a set of environmental standards it will use to determine whether it will work with a particular vendor, executives said.

The push for better data from suppliers comes as companies develop systems for emissions accounting. U.S. securities regulators this year are expected to issue a rule requiring companies to disclose climate-related information to investors. Chair Gary Gensler said [he has asked his staff](#) to examine whether to require companies to disclose Scope 3 emissions data.

Companies often struggle when they realize that accounting for greenhouse-gas emissions doesn’t have the same level of precision as financial accounting, according to Maura Hodge, audit partner at KPMG US LLP. That is because the technology that companies use to reduce pollution is constantly changing and calculating emissions can involve making assumptions, she said.

The lack of binding reporting requirements for companies also allows for a great deal of interpretation, she added. “There’s definitely a spectrum in terms of the level of accuracy that you’re trying to get to,” Ms. Hodge said. Some finance departments have sought to hire staff to serve as controllers in charge of greenhouse-gas accounting in an effort to standardize reporting, she said.

Wilmington, Del.-based chemical producer [Chemours](#) Co. is hiring staff for its finance function to establish processes for measuring and reporting carbon emissions ahead of potentially mandatory requirements, said Chief Financial Officer Sameer Ralhan said. “We want to make sure these numbers have the same kind of rigor as our financially reported numbers,” said Mr. Ralhan.

Chemours earlier this year committed to net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 but excluded Scope 3 emissions from the target. The company, which produces chemicals for refrigeration, plastics and other markets, is looking into the best way to calculate those numbers to be as accurate as possible in its measurements, according to Mr. Ralhan.

Still, focusing too much on precision in emissions accounting can lead companies not to take immediate actions to reduce indirect emissions, such as by purchasing recycled materials, said Alberto Carrillo Pineda, managing director at the nonprofit Science Based Targets Initiative, which helps companies set and verify emissions-reduction targets. “For many years, there has been almost an ideological debate about

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| | <p>Scope 3, over whether companies have control,” Mr. Carillo Pineda said. “I think this has prevented more rapid actions.”</p> <p>For Santa Clara, Calif.-based Agilent Technologies, achieving net-zero emissions will involve convincing its supplier base to go green. Approximately 90% of the company’s carbon footprint comes from its supply chain, including from logistics firms and outsourced manufacturers, said Neil Rees, head of the company’s environmental, social and governance program. “Therein lies a challenge for us, because it’s such a fuzzy area,” Mr. Rees said.</p> <p>Agilent said in October it would achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, a goal that includes reducing Scope 3 emissions by at least 30% by 2030. Some suppliers provide detailed carbon-emissions breakdowns, while others provide no data at all. Agilent hires a third-party firm to help it create models of its supply-chain emissions for vendors that don’t provide data.</p> <p>Over the next several months, Agilent said it plans to ask its suppliers to commit to emissions-reduction goals and publish environmental data. Many of its largest suppliers have already done so, and the process of convincing others will take time, Mr. Rees said. “Obviously the ultimate threat is we’ll take our business somewhere else,” he said.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Belarus eases tensions at Poland border |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/belarus-poland-migrants-border-warehouse/2021/11/17/099d0b70-47b2-11ec-beca-3cc7103bd814_story.html |
| GIST | <p>MOSCOW — Belarus used buses Wednesday to move hundreds of migrants from the Polish border to a nearby warehouse, providing temporary shelter amid freezing temperatures and potentially easing a standoff with the European Union.</p> <p>The Belarus decision comes a day after violence erupted along the border, where migrants from the Middle East and elsewhere have been stranded. For months, Belarus has opened routes for migrants to reach E.U. borders in retaliation for European sanctions.</p> <p>Polish authorities used water cannons to push back the migrants, an escalation they said was overseen by Belarusian forces.</p> <p>Videos posted by Poland’s Ministry of National Defense showed migrants on the Belarusian side hurling stones. Some migrants pulled aside barriers as Polish authorities played warnings that “force may be used” over loudspeakers.</p> <p>The ministry said Belarusian forces had also given migrants stun grenades to throw at border guards.</p> <p>State-owned news agency BelTA reported that more than 1,000 migrants spent the night at a logistics hub near the Kuznica border crossing. Videos posted to social media showed the people getting mats to line across the concrete flooring. Other images showed some sleeping with their coats draped over them.</p> <p>It was unclear what comes next for the migrants and whether Belarusian authorities plan to bus them back to the border in the coming days. Iraq’s Foreign Ministry spokesman, Ahmed al-Sahaf, told Iraqi media this week that the country “will carry out a first flight Thursday for those who wish to return” from Belarus “voluntarily.”</p> <p>Attempts at a diplomatic resolution have ramped up. The E.U. on Monday agreed to impose new sanctions against Belarus, which it accuses of using vulnerable refugees and migrants to launch a “hybrid attack” on its borders since the summer.</p> <p>E.U. sanctions came after the bloc said Alexander Lukashenko — often called Europe’s last dictator by foes — orchestrated the audacious diversion of a Ryanair plane in May to detain a Belarusian journalist.</p> |

Belarusian officials were also hit with sanctions last year for a crackdown on peaceful protesters after a presidential election in which Lukashenko claimed he swept to victory. The vote has been widely denounced as rigged.

In June, Lukashenko announced that Belarus would stop policing its borders with the E.U. Amid the recent border crisis, many air links between the Middle East and Minsk have now either been suspended or are not carrying passengers who are citizens of some Middle Eastern countries.

In what some analysts saw as a small victory for Lukashenko, he spoke by phone with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Monday, marking the first time a Western leader has had direct dialogue with Lukashenko since his disputed reelection last year.

Previously, Western leaders, including Merkel, have spoken to Russian President Vladimir Putin, Lukashenko's biggest backer, in attempts to ease the crisis.

Estonian Foreign Minister Eva-Maria Liimets [told Estonian television](#) on Tuesday that Lukashenko "wants the sanctions to be stopped, [and] to be recognized as head of state."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov that "the establishment of direct contact between E.U. representatives and the Belarusian leadership is very important. This is vital."

Thousands of migrants are estimated to be trapped on the border. Those who make it across the border to Poland and are caught are often deported even if they claim asylum, a practice legalized by Poland last month although it runs contrary to international law.

That means that migrants can be trapped and pushed back and forth between the two countries for weeks, during which time they say they have little access to food and water. Polish police said they found the body of a young Syrian man in the woods near the border last week.

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Japan, US anti-sub drill South China Sea |
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| SOURCE | https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3156374/japan-and-us-stage-first-anti-submarine-exercise-south-china |
| GIST | <p>The Japanese and US navies have held their first-ever joint anti-submarine drill in the South China Sea in the latest sign of their closer defence ties.</p> <p>The Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force said that two of its destroyers – JS Kaga and JS Murasame – and an Oyashio-class submarine had joined an American Aegis destroyer, the USS Milius, for Tuesday's exercise, which also involved Japanese SH-60J helicopters and US and Japanese patrol aircraft.</p> <p>The three destroyers had taken part in another drill in the South China Sea last week, and the Japanese ships also made a port call in the Philippines over the weekend before joining the Philippine frigate BRP Jose Rizal for an exercise off Subic.</p> <p>The drills come as Japan is stepping up the pressure on Beijing over its claims to large parts of the South China Sea.</p> <p>At the start of the year it sent a note verbale to the United Nations, saying China's drawing of territorial sea baselines in the South China Sea failed to satisfy conditions set out in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.</p> <p>Beijing's claims are contested by the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei and Taiwan, and have also stoked tensions with the United States, which regularly deploys warships and planes to the disputed waters.</p> |

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| | <p>China has repeatedly warned Tokyo against actions that will affect the two countries' relationship and criticised it for being under US influence.</p> <p>China has also been working to deepen its own military cooperation with Russia in the face of pressure from the US and its allies, and last month the two navies carried out their first joint maritime patrol around the Sea of Japan.</p> <p>Collin Koh, a research fellow from the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University, said the US-Japanese anti-submarine exercise would come as no surprise to Beijing, adding that the Japanese submarine Kuroshio had previously staged training exercises in the contested waters.</p> <p>"So this joint anti-submarine drill in the South China Sea involving a Japanese maritime self-defence force sub would represent a step-up," he said. "That may complicate China's own anti-submarine efforts in the area, since it's building up this capacity. But I don't think it'll be alarmed per se. In any case, there are a few issues to consider".</p> <p>He said the Chinese military has a "home ground advantage" because of its military build-up in the disputed waters, and it remains to be seen whether Japan will make regular submarine deployments in future.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Austria Covid cases surge to record high |
| SOURCE | https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/public-global-health/581900-austrian-cases-hit-record-high-amid-quarantine-for |
| GIST | <p>Coronavirus infections surged to a record high in Austria on Wednesday as the country entered the third day of a lockdown for unvaccinated people.</p> <p>According to Reuters, daily infections reached 14,416, passing 14,000 for the first time. The country recorded about 9,586 daily infections at the peak of what had been the nation's largest wave nearly a year ago.</p> <p>About 65 percent of Austria's population is currently fully vaccinated against the coronavirus. The country also has one of the highest infection rates in Europe, the news service reported.</p> <p>The lockdown for unvaccinated people applies to the regions of Upper Austria and in Salzburg and only allows them to leave home to go to work, go grocery shopping, attend doctor's appointments or stretch their legs, Reuters noted.</p> <p>Concern about the effectiveness of the lockdown of the unvaccinated has reportedly arisen in Austria as doubts surge about whether it can be properly enforced.</p> <p>In Upper Austria and Salzburg, hospitals are experiencing increased strain due to the coronavirus. Salzburg is currently preparing for its hospitals to enter a triage situation to potentially manage the number of people needing intensive care beds, according to Reuters.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Inflation in Britain climbs to 10yr-high |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/17/business/news-business-stock-market#britain-inflation |
| GIST | <p>Inflation in Britain rose to its highest level in nearly a decade in October after soaring energy prices hit household bills.</p> <p>The Consumer Price Index rose to 4.2 percent from a year earlier, the highest since November 2011, and up from 3.1 percent in September, the Office for National Statistics said on Wednesday. The price</p> |

increases were more than twice the central bank's target of 2 percent, increasing the likelihood that policymakers will go ahead with the interest rate increases they have signaled are coming.

The biggest contributor to higher inflation was a surge in energy costs, including wholesale natural gas, which has caused nearly [two dozen energy suppliers in Britain to collapse](#) and disrupted manufacturers.

The cap on energy bills, which protects about 15 million households, was raised 12 percent sharply in October.

Other large contributors were higher prices for gasoline and at hotels and restaurants, the statistics agency said.

The [Bank of England](#) has said it expects inflation to peak at about 5 percent in the spring. "This period of higher inflation is likely to be temporary," Andrew Bailey, the central bank's governor, said this month. But there was "no fixed unit of time" that defines transitory, he said.

The central bank said that "it would be necessary over coming months" to raise interest rates if the economic data played out as policymakers anticipate, especially if the end of the government's furlough program doesn't result in a large increase in unemployment. In the three months through September, [the unemployment rate](#) was 4.3 percent, 0.2 of a percentage point lower than in the three months through July, and [early payroll data](#) indicated that only a small number of people lost their jobs in October when the furlough program expired.

As the global economy emerged from successive lockdowns over the past year, supply bottlenecks, labor market shortages and other shortages have disrupted supply chains around the world. Policymakers are now warning that the supply problems and the higher prices that result will last longer than they initially expected, adding pressure on central bankers to act more aggressively to stop inflation from getting out of their control.

In the United States, the Consumer Price Index jumped to 6.2 percent in October, the [fastest annual increase since 1990](#), and prices rose [4.1 percent in the eurozone](#) last month, the fastest in 13 years. In China, the prices wholesalers pay to producers climbed to the highest in 26 years amid rising commodity prices and [power shortages](#).

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Netherlands near max capacity to test |
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| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/17/world/europe/covid-testing-netherlands.html |
| GIST | <p>Soaring demand for Covid testing in the Netherlands, combined with a shortage of workers to book them, is pushing the limits of the country's health services, officials have said.</p> <p>In a statement on Tuesday, the association of regional health services in the Netherlands called the increase in demand for new testing appointments "explosive," adding that it was taking the approach of "all hands on deck."</p> <p>Officials said that they aimed to reach up to 120,000 tests a day, depending on workers' availability. On Monday, at least 116,000 new appointments were scheduled and 91,000 people were tested — new daily records — according to Jaap Eikelboom, a Covid program director for the health service association.</p> <p>"We are reaching the maximum of our capacity on all sides," he said.</p> <p>Virus cases have been rising in the Netherlands, with more than 110,000 people testing positive over the past week, an increase of almost 44 percent compared with the week before, according to official figures. Last week, the government announced a national partial lockdown for three weeks, including limited operating hours for restaurants, bars and shops.</p> |

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| | <p>It is also now largely impossible to book most Covid testing appointments online because of the high demand, the Dutch newspaper De Volkskrant reported, saying that there was only one place in the Netherlands — in the southern province of Zeeland — where people were able to do so.</p> <p>Speaking at a news conference this month, Prime Minister Mark Rutte hailed the importance of testing to stop the spread of the virus, even for people who are vaccinated.</p> <p>“Stay home if you have symptoms, and get tested,” he said.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Ireland adds new Covid restrictions |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/17/world/covid-vaccine-boosters-mandates?action=click&pgtype=Article&module=&state=default&region=footer&context=breakout_link_back_to_briefing#ireland-adds-new-restrictions-including-early-pub-closings |
| GIST | <p>Ireland’s bars and nightclubs will be required to close at midnight starting on Friday as part of measures that the government is imposing to curb the spread of the coronavirus as a surge of cases has left hospitals overwhelmed and officials scrambling for solutions.</p> <p>The measures, which the country’s leader, Micheal Martin, announced on Tuesday night, also include a request that people work from home when possible and a requirement that they show a vaccine pass before entering theaters.</p> <p>“The surge that we are now experiencing is a dramatic reminder of what this virus can do and the threat that it continues to represent,” Mr. Martin said. “We need to act now to deal with this surge.”</p> <p>In the last week, Ireland has experienced its second highest rate of hospital admissions in 2021, Mr. Martin said, a situation that is putting hospitals nationwide under significant pressure.</p> <p>But even as the measures were announced, Mr. Martin acknowledged that “continued progress in the journey to normal conditions is not inevitable.”</p> <p>He said that he could not rule out further measures to curb the spread of the virus, but that the country’s successful vaccination program meant that a large-scale lockdown could be avoided at least for now.</p> <p>Stephen Donnelly, the health minister, said that “stark new modeling” on the number of predicted cases was behind the rationale for the new measures.</p> <p>Speaking to RTE Radio, the public broadcaster, he said on Tuesday that the models showed that without mitigation measures, Ireland’s intensive care units would see an influx of 200 to 450 patients by Christmas. The country has just over 300 permanent intensive-care beds.</p> <p>“That would be something we have to avoid, so we are making some changes,” Mr. Donnelly said.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Sheriffs: ‘no confidence’ in DHS chief |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/17/sheriffs-declare-no-confidence-dhs-secretary-mayor/ |
| GIST | <p>The Western States Sheriffs’ Association has issued a declaration of “no confidence” in Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, saying he’s led a Biden team that has turned the southern border into “an invisible line in the sand.”</p> <p>The sheriffs, who represent 17 states, called on President Biden to oust Mr. Mayorkas and find a new department chief who will work with them to restore respect for the border and immigration law.</p> |

They pointed to a surge of people and, more acutely, of drugs pouring across the border in recent months and reaching deeper into America's interior, bringing the impact of border chaos straight to their communities.

They also tied some of the recent increases in violent crimes in major cities to illegal immigrants.

"America's sheriffs have watched in disbelief as the southern border has turned into an invisible line in the sand," the sheriffs said this week in a position paper signed by association President Leo Dutton, sheriff in Montana's Lewis and Clark County, and Executive Director James F. Pond.

Illegal activity along the border set records over the last fiscal year, with almost all of the chaos coming on Mr. Biden's watch. The summer saw the Border Patrol flirt with 200,000 arrests each month, and though that has leveled off somewhat, October's figure of nearly 160,000 was still the worst October on record.

The sheriffs said things had been improving in recent years, with "a great deal of progress" in cutting illegal border crossings. The Biden team has erased those gains, the association said, laying blame at Mr. Mayorkas' feet.

"Since his appointment we have seen his policies enacted that are personal and political ideologies that continue to dismantle the security of our country and the enforcement efforts of the hard-working federal officers assigned to an extremely difficult task," the association said.

It's more than just the sheer numbers, the sheriffs said.

Most of those coming do so with permission, and often help, of smuggling cartels, which control the approaches to the U.S. border and usually charge a "mafia fee" or "piso" to use their routes.

Those who don't have the cash upfront will have to work to pay off the debt, with some going into drug trafficking, forced labor or prostitution to make good on what they owe.

The Washington Times has reached out to the Department of Homeland Security for comment on the sheriffs' statement.

Mr. Mayorkas, testifying to senators on Capitol Hill this week, graded himself an "A for effort" and insisted the border is under control, at least when measured by the humanity of the policies in place.

"I put 100% into my work, and I'm incredibly proud to do so," he said.

Senators from both parties delivered plenty of criticism on how the sprawling department has handled itself so far.

Republicans were incredulous at Mr. Mayorkas' assessment of his performance, though one, Sen. John Kennedy of Louisiana, said he doubted Mr. Mayorkas bears the blame.

"I don't think you deserve to have to be here today to answer questions about immigration because I don't think you're calling the shots," Mr. Kennedy said. "I think those shots are being called out of the White House."

Mr. Mayorkas said he was "proud" to be part of the Biden team and is the man to talk to about immigration.

"For the policies that are promulgated, I should be held accountable," he said.

Rep. Andy Biggs, Arizona Republican, has written articles of impeachment against Mr. Mayorkas, saying he failed in his duty to secure the border and to curtail the spread of the coronavirus.

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 British Columbia state of emergency |
| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/canada-sending-military-personnel-bc-floods-81231715 |
| GIST | <p>VANCOUVER, British Columbia -- The Canadian Pacific coast province of British Columbia declared a state of emergency Wednesday following floods and mudslides caused by extremely heavy rainfall, and officials said they expected to find more dead.</p> <p>Every major route between the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, where Canada's third largest city of Vancouver is, and the interior of the province has been cut by washouts, flooding or landslides following record-breaking rain across southern British Columbia between Saturday and Monday. The body of a woman was recovered from one of the mudslides late Monday.</p> <p>“Torrential rains have led to terrible flooding that has disrupted the lives and taken lives of people across B.C. I want people to know that the federal government has been engaging with the local authorities,” Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said in Washington. “We're sending resources like the Canadian Armed Forces to support people but also we'll be there for the cleanup and the rebuilding after impacts of these extreme weather events.”</p> <p>The federal government said it was sending the air force to assist with evacuations and to support supply lines.</p> <p>Military helicopters already helped evacuate about 300 people from one highway where people were trapped in their cars Sunday night following a mudslide,</p> <p>“We expect to confirm even more fatalities in the coming days,” British Columbia Premier John Horgan said.</p> <p>Horgan called it a once in a 500 years event. He said the state of emergency will include travel restrictions so the transport of essential goods medical and emergency services will reach the communities that need them. He asked people not to hoard goods.</p> <p>“These are very challenging times. I've been at this dais for two years now talking about challenging times we have faced — unprecedented challenges with public health, wildfires, heat domes and now debilitating floods that we have never seen before,” Horgan said.</p> <p>Horgan said over the past six months there have been drought conditions in Merritt, where the river was at its lowest point in living memory and where people had to be evacuated because of wildfires in temperatures that were unprecedented. And now, he said, much of the community is under water.</p> <p>“We need to start preparing for a future that includes more events like this,” Horgan said.</p> <p>The weather events are all connected and can be attributed to climate change, said John Clague, a professor in the Earth Sciences Department at Simon Fraser University.</p> <p>“Scientists are now saying these particular events, they’re becoming more frequent, exacerbated or ramped up by climate change,” he said.</p> <p>The record temperatures in the summer set the stage for the wildfires, said Clague. The fires burned the ground in a way that prevents water from seeping into the soil. He said that resulted in the water from the torrential rains pouring more quickly into steams and rivers, causing floods.</p> <p>The total number of people and vehicles unaccounted for had not yet been confirmed near the town of Lillooet. Investigators had received reports of two other people who were missing but added that other motorists might have been buried in a slide on Highway 99. “</p> |

Chelsey Hughes said she was thankful to have survived the slide that slammed into her car before it landed in a swamp as she was driving along the highway. Hughes was heading home Sunday when she saw a tree starting to fall as a slide shoved her car about a mile off the road and down an embankment.

“Then the car stopped moving and I was just shocked. I was afraid to move because I didn’t know if I was injured,” she said after spending about five hours shivering on top of her car without a jacket next to another vehicle with four university students sharing one jacket atop their vehicle.

When Hughes finally connected with a 911 dispatcher, he helped her monitor one student’s condition after he had an asthma attack before they finally saw the lights of rescuers.

They spent an hour hiking out, she said of the traumatic events that unfolded Sunday night before nine of them were taken to hospital. She said she has been thinking about the family of a woman who died.

“I think that could have been any one of us, and there’s nothing that you can do. When we got hit by that landslide, we just had to surrender,” she said.

Agriculture Minister Lana Popham said thousands of animals had died and the province was rushing to get veterinarians to other animals that are in danger.

“I can also tell you that many farmers attempted to move animals and then had to walk away because the roads were disappearing beneath them,” she said.

A trade expert said the loss of major transportation routes will hurt the movement of goods both in and out Canada’s largest port in Vancouver.

“Vancouver really has an outsized role to play in our Pacific trade,” said Werner Antweiler, an associate professor at the UBC Sauder School of Business. “Commodities will be impacted in a much more significant way because it’s coming by rail or coming by big trucks.”

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Migrant camps grow in Mexico; uncertainty |
| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/migrant-camps-grow-mexico-amid-uncertainty-us-policy-81247591 |
| GIST | <p>TIJUANA, Mexico -- As darkness fell, about 250 police officers and city workers swept into a squalid camp for migrants hoping to apply for asylum in the United States. Migrants had to register for credentials or leave. Within hours, those who stayed were surrounded by enough chain-link fence to extend twice the height of the Statue of Liberty.</p> <p>The Oct. 28 operation may have been the beginning of the end for a camp that once held about 2,000 people and blocks a major border crossing to the United States. There may be more camps to come.</p> <p>First lady Jill Biden sharply criticized a similar camp in Matamoros, bordering Brownsville, Texas, on a 2019 visit, saying, “It’s not who we are as Americans.” The Biden administration touted its work closing that camp in March, but others sprang up around the same time in nearby Reynosa and in Tijuana.</p> <p>The camps, full of young children, are a product of policies that force migrants to wait in Mexico for hearings in U.S. immigration court or prohibit them from seeking asylum under pandemic-related public health powers. Uncertainty about U.S. asylum policies has also contributed to growing migrant populations in Mexican border cities, creating conditions for more camps.</p> <p>Migrants are often out of public view in border cities, but the Tijuana camp is highly visible and disruptive. Tents covered with blue tarps and black plastic bags block entry to a border crossing where an average of about 12,000 people entered the U.S. daily before the pandemic. It is one of three pedestrian crossings to San Diego.</p> |

The U.S. fully reopened land borders with Mexico and Canada to vaccinated travelers Nov. 8.

Montserrat Caballero, Tijuana's first female mayor, said officials did "almost nothing" to control the camp before she took office Oct. 1. When she asked Mexico's state and federal governments to join her in erecting a fence and introducing a registry, they declined.

"The authorities at every level were scared — scared of making a mistake, scared of doing something wrong and affecting their political careers," she said in an interview. "No one wants to deal with these issues."

Caballero said she acted to protect migrants. She knows of no homicides or kidnappings at the camp, but The Associated Press found that assaults, drug use and threats have been common.

"I could not close my eyes to the flashing red light I saw," she said. "Closing your eyes only allows it grow."

The only entry-exit is guarded around the clock by Tijuana police. Migrants with credentials are free to come and go.

"There is no asylum process (in the United States) until further notice," Enrique Lucero, the city's director of migrant services, told people who asked about U.S. policy on a morning walk-through last week.

Since March 2020, the U.S. has used Title 42, named for a public health law, to expel adults and families without an opportunity for asylum; unaccompanied children are exempt. But the Biden administration has exercised that authority on only about one of every four who come in families, largely due to resource constraints and Mexico's reluctance to take back Central American families.

It's unclear why the U.S. releases many families to seek asylum and returns others to Mexico, prompting those who are turned back to stick around until they succeed.

Mayra Funes, a 28-year-old Honduran, said she didn't get a chance to make her case to agents when she was expelled crossing the border illegally near McAllen, Texas, in March with her 7-year-old daughter. She doesn't know if she will try again after six months in the Tijuana camp.

"There is no hope of knowing how they are going to open the process," she said.

Lucero, a soft-spoken graduate of George Washington University who worked at the Mexican consulate in Chicago, says his job is persuading migrants to move to a shelter, including large facilities recently opened by Mexico's federal and state governments. Many are turned off by curfews and other shelter rules and worry being farther from the border will cut them off from news on U.S. policy changes.

Natalina Nazario, 37, needed no convincing, stopping Lucero and jumping at the city's offer to pay bus fare to Acapulco, about 1,900 miles (3,040 kilometers) away, for her and her 17- and 11-year-old sons. She fears violence in the Mexican beach city but, after a month at the camp, doesn't want her children missing more school.

Few others noticed Lucero's presence. Olga Galicia, a 23-year-old from Guatemala, sat on a curb scrubbing clothes in a plastic bin of soapy water. She had been at the camp about six months and said she will stay with her 3- and 1-year-old sons until she gets more information on how to seek asylum in the United States.

Tijuana won't forcibly remove any migrants, said Caballero, who expects holdouts to leave during seasonal rains. Thousands of migrants who came in a 2018 caravan were soaked sleeping outside in frigid November downpours.

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| | <p>The city estimates the camp held 1,700 people two weeks before the Oct. 28 operation, which Caballero publicly warned was coming but didn't say when.</p> <p>The first count, on Oct. 29, showed 769 migrants, more than 40% children. Half were Mexican — many from strife-torn states of Guerrero and Michoacan — and one-third were Honduran, with El Salvadorans and Guatemalans accounting for nearly all the rest.</p> <p>The steep decline just before registration likely reflects that many living there were Tijuana's homeless, not migrants, Caballero said.</p> <p>The camp occupies a large, once-barren plaza. A warren of walkways includes rows that are wide enough in some parts for two people to stroll in opposite directions. People lounge inside tents or outside in folding chairs.</p> <p>There are 12 portable bathrooms, 10 showers and a shared water tap for washing clothes. Charities donate food to migrants who prepare hot chocolate, fried eggs, hot dogs and spaghetti for everyone. The federal utility recently stopped the camp from stealing electricity, leaving it dark at night and forcing the makeshift kitchen to rely on canned food.</p> <p>The future is less certain for a migrant camp in Reynosa, across the border from McAllen, Texas. It has about 2,000 people in a plaza near the city's main border crossing, said Felicia Rangel-Samponaro, director of The Sidewalk School, which educates children there.</p> <p>The Biden administration, under a court order, plans to soon reinstate a Trump-era policy to make asylum-seekers wait in Mexico for hearings in the U.S. It hinges on approval from Mexican officials, who have told U.S. authorities they need more shelter beds and worry about violence in the state of Tamaulipas, which includes Reynosa.</p> <p>The “Remain in Mexico” policy is expected to resume in "the coming weeks" after U.S. and Mexican authorities resolve “one set of outstanding issues,” Blas Nuñez-Nieto, acting assistant U.S. Homeland Security secretary for border and immigration policy, said in a court filing Monday. He did not elaborate.</p> <p>Caballero said U.S. authorities haven't pressured Mexico to reopen the busy pedestrian crossing between Tijuana and San Diego. U.S. Customs and Border Protection said in a statement it is working closely with Mexico “to determine how to resume normal travel safely and sustainably.”</p> <p>The mayor plans to ask Mexico's National Guard to help prevent camps from popping up again in Tijuana.</p> <p>“The reality is that camps are going to be established if we are unprepared,” she said.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/18 US warns pilots flying near Ethiopia capital |
| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-warns-pilots-weapon-fire-war-nears-ethiopia-81249680 |
| GIST | <p>NAIROBI, Kenya -- The United States is warning pilots that planes operating at one of Africa’s busiest airports could be “directly or indirectly exposed to ground weapons fire and/or surface-to-air fire” as Ethiopia’s war nears the capital, Addis Ababa.</p> <p>The Federal Aviation Administration advisory issued Wednesday cites the “ongoing clashes” between Ethiopian forces and fighters from the northern Tigray region, which have killed thousands of people in a year of war. The U.S. this week urged its citizens in Ethiopia to “leave now,” saying there should be no expectation of an Afghanistan-style evacuation.</p> <p>The Addis Ababa international airport is the hub for the state-owned Ethiopian Airlines, a symbol of Ethiopia's former status as one of the world's most rapidly growing economies before the war. Addis Ababa is also the continent's diplomatic capital as home of the African Union.</p> |

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| | <p>The FAA advisory notes no reports of disruptions at Bole International Airport and “no indication of an intent to threaten civil aviation,” but it says the risk to approaching and departing planes could increase if the Tigray fighters encircle the capital.</p> <p>The Tigray fighters “likely possess a variety of anti-aircraft capable weapons, including rocket-propelled grenades, anti-tank weapons, low-caliber anti-aircraft artillery, and man-portable air-defense systems,” or MANPADS, which could reach up to 25,000 feet above ground level, the FAA advisory says.</p> <p>In an acknowledgment of Bole airport's importance for onward travel for the African continent and beyond, the U.K. Minister for Africa Vicky Ford last week told reporters that Britain now advises against all travel to Ethiopia apart from the airport for departures and transfers.</p> <p>The Tigray forces who had long dominated the national government before current Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took office in 2018 have approached Addis Ababa in recent weeks and joined up with another armed group, the Oromo Liberation Army, with the aim of pressing Abiy to step aside.</p> <p>The Tigray forces also say they are pressuring Ethiopia’s government to lift a months-long blockade on the Tigray region, which includes an Ethiopian government restriction on flights over Tigray.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Michigan campus sudden flu outbreak |
| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/US/state-health-department-raises-alarm-campus-flu-outbreak/story?id=81236430 |
| GIST | <p>Public health officials are investigating an influenza outbreak at a Michigan university that has resulted in more than 500 cases, as several schools have also seen surges in flu activity.</p> <p>The University of Michigan's Ann Arbor campus in Washtenaw County has reported over 525 cases among students since Oct. 6 -- about three-quarters of them among people unvaccinated against the flu, school officials said this week.</p> <p>The university said it is tracking a "large and sudden increase" in cases, with nearly all reported in the past two weeks.</p> <p>"While we often start to see some flu activity now, the size of this outbreak is unusual," Juan Luis Marquez, medical director at the Washtenaw County Health Department, said in a statement.</p> <p>A team from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is helping the university and local and state health departments investigate the outbreak, including how the flu is spreading.</p> <p>Amid the surge, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services is calling on people to get the flu vaccine, as vaccine administrations are down by about 26% compared to this time last year and COVID-19 cases are also on the rise.</p> <p>"This outbreak comes at a time when COVID-19 infections are again surging in Michigan, with case rates, positivity rates, hospitalizations and deaths all increasing," the department said in a release Wednesday.</p> <p>"State and local public health officials are concerned with the potential for increased strain on health systems if COVID-19 and influenza cases surge at the same time this winter."</p> <p>Other campuses are also battling flu outbreaks. Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey, has logged 150 flu cases among students since Nov. 1, most of which were last week, Joe Cardona, the vice president of university relations, told ABC News. In response, the school has been holding flu vaccination clinics for students and staff this week.</p> |

Spikes in flu cases have also been seen at Florida State University and Florida A&M University, the Associated Press [reported](#) earlier this month.

Public health experts [have warned](#) that this flu season might be more severe, following last season's mild flu activity.

Flu cases saw a significant drop during the 2020-2021 season [according to the CDC](#) -- likely due in part to people wearing masks, practicing frequent hand hygiene and socially distancing to help limit the spread of COVID-19.

"As we head into respiratory virus season, it is important to take every mitigation measure we can to prevent outbreaks of the flu, RSV and COVID-19," Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian, chief medical executive for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, said in a statement. "Wearing masks, washing hands, social distancing and getting vaccinated for the flu and COVID-19 will help prevent the spread of illness."

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Cyber Awareness

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 FBI: zero-day abused FatPipe VPNs |
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| SOURCE | https://therecord.media/fbi-an-apt-abused-a-zero-day-in-fatpipe-vpns-for-six-months/ |
| GIST | <p>The US Federal Bureau of Investigation said it discovered an advanced persistent threat (APT) abusing a zero-day vulnerability in FatPipe networking devices as a way to breach companies and gain access to their internal networks.</p> <p>“As of November 2021, FBI forensic analysis indicated exploitation of a 0-day vulnerability in the FatPipe MPVPN device software going back to at least May 2021,” the agency said in a flash security alert sent out on Tuesday.</p> <p>The FBI said the vulnerability allowed the hacking group to exploit a file upload function in the device’s firmware and install a webshell with root access.</p> <p>The FBI said it spotted the hackers abusing the zero-day only against FatPipe MPVPN devices, but the vulnerability also impacted other products, such as IPVPN and WARP.</p> <p>All are different types of virtual private network (VPN) servers that companies install at the perimeter of their corporate networks and use to allow employees remote access to internal applications via the internet, acting as mash-up between network gateways and firewalls.</p> <p>Patch released yesterday, November 16</p> <p>The FBI said the zero-day it discovered during its investigation does not currently have its own CVE identifier, but FatPipe has released a patch and additional information via an internal security advisory tracked as FPSA006.</p> <p>To help IT and security teams check if their FatPipe systems have been hacked and detect the intruder’s webshells, the FBI has also published several indicators of compromise (IOCs) and YARA signatures as part of its alert [PDF].</p> <p>FatPipe now joins a long list of networking equipment makers that have had their systems abused for cyber intrusions. The list includes the likes of Cisco, Microsoft, Oracle, F5 Networks, Palo Alto Networks, Fortinet, and Citrix, just to name the bigger ones.</p> <p>Attacks targeting networking devices such as firewalls, VPN servers, network gateways, and load balancers had ramped up during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic when threat actors realized that these</p> |

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| | devices are installed almost all large corporate and government networks — as a way to let remote workers connect to internal applications. |
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| HEADLINE | 11/18 RedCurl hacking group returns; new attacks |
| SOURCE | https://therecord.media/redcurl-hacking-group-returns-with-new-attacks/ |
| GIST | <p>Even after its operations were publicly exposed in August 2020, the RedCurl hacking group has continued to carry out new intrusions and has breached at least four companies this year, according to a new report from security firm Group-IB.</p> <p>Targets hacked this year included two companies based in Russia, along with two others that Group-IB researchers said they couldn't identify.</p> <p>All in all, the group has now been linked to at least 30 intrusions since 2018, when it began operating, with victims located in the UK, Germany, Canada, Norway, Russia, and Ukraine.</p> <p>Group-IB, which it previously detailed the group's modus operandi in a report last year, said RedCurl consists of Russian-speaking members who have primarily engaged in corporate espionage, targeting companies across the world to steal documents that contain commercial secrets and employee personal data.</p> <p>Besides discovering new attacks, Group-IB's latest report also notes that RedCurl operators have done little to change their tactics besides a few updates to the tools they used during intrusions.</p> <p>However, researchers did find one interesting tidbit in one of their investigations, notably that RedCurl operators had changed the time on a compromised system to UTC+3, the timezone for regions like Minsk, Moscow, Turkey, and many countries in the Middle East, where hacking groups have often been discovered to operate.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/16 DHS launches cybersecurity jobs hiring |
| SOURCE | https://www.zdnet.com/article/the-us-government-just-launched-a-big-push-to-fill-cybersecurity-jobs-with-salaries-to-match/ |
| GIST | <p>The US Department of Homeland Security, a key cybersecurity agency, has just announced a new system that will help it recruit, develop and retrain cybersecurity pros in the federal government.</p> <p>The DHS's new recruitment system, dubbed the Cybersecurity Talent Management System (CTMS), launches amid a tight labor market for cybersecurity professionals who are in extremely high demand and can therefore command big salaries.</p> <p>DHS is just one federal department, but it plays a special role in responding to major cyberattacks on US critical infrastructure. It hopes the new system will help it hunt for and can keep talent for mission critical- critical roles, with the aim of hiring 150 priority roles across 2022.</p> <p>"CTMS will enable DHS to fill mission-critical cybersecurity positions by screening applicants based on demonstrated competencies, competitively compensating employees, and reducing the time it takes to be hired into the department," it said.</p> <p>The first roles to be filled using CTMS will be "high-priority" jobs at CISA and the DHS Office of the chief information officer. Then in 2022, DHS Cybersecurity Service jobs will be available across several DHS agencies with a cybersecurity mission, says DHS.</p> <p>The CTMS salary range has an upper limit of the vice president's salary (\$255,800 in 2021), plus an extended range for use in limited circumstances, which has an upper limit of \$332,100 in 2021.</p> |

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| | <p>DHS is currently recruiting for a variety of cybersecurity roles, including incident response, risk analysis, vulnerability detection and assessment, intelligence and investigation, networks and systems engineer, forensics, and software assurance.</p> <p>The CTMS "fundamentally re-imagines how the Department hires, develops, and retains top-tier and diverse cybersecurity talent," says secretary of Homeland Security, Alejandro N. Mayorkas.</p> <p>"As our nation continues to face an evolving threat landscape, we cannot rely only on traditional hiring tools to fill mission-critical vacancies. This new system will enable our department to better compete for cybersecurity professionals and remain agile enough to meet the demands of our critical cybersecurity mission."</p> <p>The Biden-Harris administration made cybersecurity a priority at an early stage, for example, by appointing the US's first deputy national security advisor for cyber, Anne Neuberger, who led federal investigations into the SolarWinds and Exchange attacks.</p> <p>DHS, in particular its Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, or CISA, was given an elevated cybersecurity role too, via Biden's cybersecurity executive order.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/18 Prolific NKorea cyber-espionage hackers |
| SOURCE | https://www.cyberscoop.com/north-korea-hackers-kimsuky-ta406-cryptocurrency/ |
| GIST | <p>A North Korean cyber espionage group known primarily for targeting think tanks, advocacy groups, journalists and others related to Pyongyang's adversaries around the world has been quite prolific in 2021, according to email security firm Proofpoint.</p> <p>The stepped-up action includes launching near-weekly attacks, among them two previously unreported campaigns.</p> <p>In findings published Thursday, the firm examined the activities of a group it refers to as TA406, which it considers to be one of the components of an organization known more broadly as Kimsuky that's been active since at least 2012.</p> <p>The U.S. government issued a public alert to the private sector in October 2020 about Kimsuky, warning of spearphishing, watering hole attacks and other methods designed to steal credentials.</p> <p>TA406 targets research, education, government, media and other organizations for credential theft, Proofpoint analysts Darien Huss and Selena Larson wrote. The group's other activities involve financial crimes and sextortion, and an increased use of malware. The campaigns remained "low in volume" until the beginning of January 2021, but starting then and through June 2021, the group launched "almost weekly campaigns," the researchers wrote.</p> <p>The first previously unreported campaign, in March 2021, used an email purportedly sent by Chad O'Carroll, an expert on North Korea and the CEO of Korea Risk, an analysis firm focused on North Korean issues. The email contained a link that sent the target to a domain controlled by the group, which hosted a legitimate news article about the March 21 North Korean missile tests.</p> <p>The link also downloaded a file that would create a scheduled task that executed every 15 minutes to download a payload from a TA406-controlled server. Proofpoint analysts did not see what the follow-on payloads were, so it's unclear what happened next.</p> <p>Relying on a legitimate news article hosted on an attacker-controlled domain or embedded in a document is a previous tactic the hackers used to deploy KONNI, a remote administration tool, the day after a North</p> |

[Korean missile test in 2017](#), the Proofpoint researchers note. KONNI has been used to [target North Korea](#) in the past, as well as Russia, [Malwarebytes reported in August](#).

The second campaign, in June 2021, also purported to come from O’Carroll. That email contained an HTML attachment masquerading as an article preview. If clicked, the attachment displayed a fake error message with a button to save the document.

If the target downloaded the document, they got served a malicious Word file that sought to deploy a downloader Proofpoint calls “FatBoy” that ultimately lead to a script that could collect “extensive information” about the targeted device. The email also contained an invisible iframe that collected basic information about the target.

The report also highlighted a TA406 Windows keylogger that Proofpoint called “YoreKey,” and a deobfuscation service North Korea may have been using for financial gain. The service — “Deioncube” — was developed some time in 2020 and offered the ability to “decode the files encrypted with IonCube easily.” IonCube is software that encodes PHP scripts. Users could pay \$10 to decode one file, or \$500 for up to 500 files, payable in either bitcoin or ethereum cryptocurrencies. It’s unclear whether the service actually worked, the researchers wrote.

The researchers noted that the domain advertising the North Korean service was registered with the email address “donaldxxxtrump[@]yandex.ru,” which was also used to register several credential harvesting and malware campaigns in 2021.

Proofpoint and Malwarebytes aren’t alone in noticing Kimsuky getting busy in 2021. Elsewhere, the hackers have been suspected of targeting [South Korean think tanks](#) and [adopting updated tactics](#).

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Phishers targeting streaming services users |
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| SOURCE | https://threatpost.com/netflix-bait-phishers-fake-signups/176422/ |
| GIST | <p>The past year’s massive migration of movie and television audiences to streaming services has provided scammers with a sweet opportunity to launch phishing attempts to lure would-be subscribers into giving up their payment information.</p> <p>Where there’s payment data, cybercriminals are sure to follow, Kaspersky’s Leonid Grustniy pointed out in his latest report, warning about phishing campaigns disguised to look like Netflix, Amazon Prime and other streaming service offers.</p> <p>“Streaming services offer a variety of payment plans, but generally they all involve paying with a credit card,” Grustniy explained. “And where there are card details, there is phishing.”</p> <p>Scam Subscriber Targeting</p> <p>Kaspersky’s researchers observed various lures aimed at targets, depending on their current streaming subscription status. Fake sign-up pages for services like Netflix were used to pry email addresses and credit-card information from victims.</p> <p>“Armed with your info, they can withdraw or spend your money right away; your email address should come in handy for future attacks,” Grustniy wrote.</p> <p>Current Netflix subs were sent a phishing email requesting they update their billing information.</p> <p>“We’re having some trouble with your current billing information,” the email read. “We’ll try again, but in the meantime, you may want to update your payment details.”</p> <p>A link to “Update Your Account Now” followed, along with the signoff, “Your friends at Netflix.”</p> |

The link leads to a malicious payment confirmation page addressing “costumers” instead of “consumers.”

Stealing Payment Information

Another tactic aimed at streamers and observed by Kaspersky researchers included fake offers to stream popular shows like Disney’s The Mandalorian. Victims would watch a trailer, then be asked for a fee to continue, giving the scammers their payment details, the report said.

“What follows is a classic scenario: Any payment details users enter go straight to the crooks, and the never-before-seen episode remains such,” Grustniy added.

Stolen streaming credentials are also valuable and have been sold in underground markets.

“After all, depending on your Netflix plan, you can stream on (up to four) devices simultaneously, and cybercriminals can sell your login credentials to any number of streamers,” Grustniy wrote. “That means you might find yourself having to wait in line until some stranger decides to sign out.”

Even worse, the subscription’s stolen password could be used in attacks against other victim accounts, according to the report.

The widespread cultural influence of video streaming services is increasingly being weaponized by scammers. The explosion in worldwide interest in Netflix’s Squid Game recently helped scam crypto investors out of more than \$3.3 million, for instance.

Last spring, Check Point Research discovered a malicious Netflix app in the Google Play store and spread through WhatsApp messages.

Kaspersky advises users to avoid clicking on any emails that appear to be associated with streaming services, and to pay attention to obvious signs it’s a scam, like misspellings in communications where they’re asked for payment information.

“Do not trust any person or site promising viewings of movies or shows before the official premiere,” Grustniy added.

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Ransom susceptible: weekends, holidays |
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| SOURCE | https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/orgs-ransomware-weekends-holidays/ |
| GIST | <p>Organizations are significantly more vulnerable to ransomware attacks during weekends and holidays, according to a new study by Cybereason.</p> <p>Of the 500 UK security professionals included in the survey, 37% admitted their organization does not have specific contingency plans in place to mount a prompt response to a ransomware attack during weekend and holiday periods. This is despite all the respondents being at organizations that had previously suffered a successful ransomware attack.</p> <p>This lack of preparedness has a significant impact on the capabilities of security teams. For example, over two-fifths (43%) of respondents said they required more time to mount an effective response, and close to a third (31%) indicated they need more time to fully recover from an attack over weekend and holiday periods. This is despite 89% confirming they are concerned about attacks taking place during these times.</p> <p>In another worrying finding from the report, 71% of security professionals surveyed admitted they have been intoxicated while responding to a ransomware attack on a weekend or holiday. Additionally, over nine in 10 (91%) reported missing a holiday or weekend activity because of a ransomware attack.</p> <p>Having insufficient security tools and solutions were also blamed for successful ransomware attacks by 43% of respondents. The study found that just 69% of organizations had a next-generation antivirus</p> |

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| | <p>(NGAV) solution deployed at the time of attack, 42% had a traditional signature-based antivirus (AV) in place and only 36% had an endpoint detection and response (EDR) solution.</p> <p>Lior Div, chief executive officer and co-founder of Cybereason, commented: “Ransomware attackers don’t take time off for holidays. The most disruptive ransomware attacks in 2021 have occurred over weekends and during major holidays when attackers know they have the advantage over targeted organizations.</p> <p>“This research proves out the fact that organizations are not adequately prepared and need to take additional steps to assure they have the right people, processes and technologies in place so they can effectively respond to ransomware attacks and protect their critical assets.”</p> <p>The findings provide further credence to the theory that organizations are significantly more susceptible to cyber-attacks on weekends and holidays. Ahead of Labor Day in the US this year, the FBI and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) issued a warning that ransomware attacks are more likely to be successful over the periods, as IT incident responders will not be at their desks.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 DDoS attacks surge; VoIP targeted |
| SOURCE | https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/ddos-attacks-surge-35-in-q3-as/ |
| GIST | <p>Security experts have warned of a surge in distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks in the third quarter, with quantity, size and complexity all increasing in the period.</p> <p>The findings come from Lumen’s Q3 DDoS Report, which revealed that the firm mitigated 35% more attacks in the quarter than Q2 2021.</p> <p>The vendor claimed that the largest bandwidth attack it tackled during the period was 612 Gbps — a 49% increase over Q2. The largest packet rate-based attack scrubbed was 252 Mbps — a 91% increase.</p> <p>Lumen said the longest attack on a customer lasted two weeks, highlighting the potentially crippling impact DDoS can have on an organization. Among the 500 largest attacks, the most frequently attacked verticals were telecoms and software/technology, followed by retail.</p> <p>For the first time, 28% of multi-vector mitigations involved a complex combination of four different attack types — DNS amplification, TCP RST, TCP SYN-ACK amplification and UDP amplification, the vendor claimed.</p> <p>September marked 25 years since the first DDoS attack was recorded, with Russian provider Yandex reporting the largest volumetric attack of all time that same month.</p> <p>However, according to experts, not a great deal has changed over the years in that attacks are still relatively cheap, easy and effective at disrupting victim organizations.</p> <p>To that end, DDoS-ers have increasingly been using such attacks over recent years to extort ransom payments from their victims.</p> <p>A report published by Neustar in August claimed that over two-fifths (44%) of organizations had been targeted or fallen victim to a ransom-related DDoS (RDDoS) attack in the previous 12 months.</p> <p>Lumen director of information security and threat intelligence, Mark Dehus, revealed that attacks are also being aimed at new services such as voice.</p> <p>“We want businesses to join the fight to protect themselves,” he said. “First, have a solid strategy in place to address all potential security issues. Second, work with an established DDoS mitigation partner — particularly one that can track DDoS botnets and find new sources before they launch an attack.”</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 US, UK, Australia advisory Iranian hackers |
| SOURCE | https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/us-uk-warn-of-iranian-hackers-exploiting-microsoft-exchange-fortinet/ |
| GIST | <p>US, UK, and Australian cybersecurity agencies warned today of ongoing exploitation of Microsoft Exchange ProxyShell and Fortinet vulnerabilities linked to an Iranian-backed hacking group.</p> <p>The warning was issued as a joint advisory released by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC), and the United Kingdom's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC).</p> <p>"FBI and CISA have observed this Iranian government-sponsored APT group exploit Fortinet vulnerabilities since at least March 2021 and a Microsoft Exchange ProxyShell vulnerability since at least October 2021 to gain initial access to systems in advance of follow-on operations, which include deploying ransomware," CISA said.</p> <p>"ACSC is also aware this APT group has used the same Microsoft Exchange vulnerability in Australia," the joint advisory adds.</p> <p>The Iranian state hackers focus their attacks on US critical infrastructure sectors (e.g., transportation, healthcare) and Australian organizations.</p> <p>They aim to gain initial access to targets from critical sectors that could later be used for other nefarious purposes, including data exfiltration, ransomware deployment, and extortion.</p> <p>CISA and the FBI also shared info on multiple instances when the Iranian-sponsored hacking group was observed, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In March 2021, the FBI and CISA observed these Iranian government-sponsored APT actors scanning devices on ports 4443, 8443, and 10443 for Fortinet FortiOS vulnerability CVE-2018-13379, and enumerating devices for FortiOS vulnerabilities CVE-2020-12812 and CVE-2019-5591. The Iranian Government-sponsored APT actors likely exploited these vulnerabilities to gain access to vulnerable networks. • In May 2021, these Iranian government-sponsored APT actors exploited a Fortigate appliance to access a web server hosting the domain for a US municipal government. The actors likely created an account with the username elie to further enable malicious activity. • In June 2021, these APT actors exploited a Fortigate appliance to access environmental control networks associated with a U.S.-based hospital specializing in healthcare for children. The APT actors accessed known user accounts at the hospital from IP address 154.16.192[.170, which FBI and CISA judge is associated with the government of Iran offensive cyber activity. • As of October 2021, these APT actors have leveraged a Microsoft Exchange ProxyShell vulnerability—CVE-2021-34473—to gain initial access to systems in advance of follow-on operations. <p>The information included in this joint advisory lines up with details shared in a Microsoft Threat Intelligence Center (MSTIC) report on Tuesday.</p> <p>In the report, Microsoft provided information on the evolution of Iranian APTs and their capability to adapt as an always shape-shifting threat.</p> <p>Microsoft said it has been tracking six Iranian threat groups who have been deploying ransomware and exfiltrating data in attacks that started in September 2020.</p> <p>MSTIC observed them scanning and exploiting vulnerabilities in many products, including Fortinet's FortiOS SSL VPN and Microsoft Exchange server vulnerable to ProxyShell bugs.</p> |

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| | <p>The FBI also warned private industry partners a week ago of an Iranian threat actor trying to buy stolen information associated with US and worldwide organizations from clear and dark web sources to breach their systems,</p> <p>"The FBI, CISA, ACSC, and NCSC urge critical infrastructure organizations to apply the recommendations listed in the Mitigations section of this advisory to mitigate risk of compromise from Iranian government-sponsored cyber actors," the agencies added.</p> <p>More technical details on these attacks, including indicators of compromise, MITRE ATT&CK tactics and techniques, detection measures, and mitigations, can be found in the joint advisory published earlier today.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Cyber conflict between US, Iran heats up |
| SOURCE | https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/cyber-conflict-between-us-and-iran-heats-up |
| GIST | <p>Cybersecurity agencies in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia warned on Wednesday that Iran-linked cyberattack groups were ramping up operations, targeting vulnerabilities in enterprise technology to compromise organizations in the US and Australia.</p> <p>In a joint advisory issued Nov. 17, the FBI, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC), and the United Kingdom's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) blamed Iran for a broad rise in attacks using vulnerabilities in Fortinet's FortiOS and Microsoft Exchange. The attackers often activate BitLocker on compromised Windows machines to encrypt data for ransom or hinder operations, the agencies said.</p> <p>Three Fortinet vulnerabilities have been used since at least March against US targets, while both the US and Australia have seen attacks targeting the Microsoft Exchange ProxyShell issue, the advisory stated.</p> <p>"The Iranian government-sponsored APT actors are actively targeting a broad range of victims across multiple U.S. critical infrastructure sectors, including the Transportation Sector and the Healthcare and Public Health Sector, as well as Australian organizations," stated CISA and the FBI in a joint advisory, adding that the attacks seem more focused on gaining advantage before organizations patch specific flaws, rather than specifically targeting critical infrastructure.</p> <p>"These Iranian government-sponsored APT actors can leverage this access for follow-on operations, such as data exfiltration or encryption, ransomware, and extortion."</p> <p>These notices come less than three weeks after a top Iranian official blamed the US and Israel for attacks disrupting gasoline sales in Iran. In late October, Iran's civil defense chief, Gholamreza Jalali, blamed "the Zionist Regime, the Americans and their agents" for the outage, which affected thousands of gas stations, according to a Reuters report.</p> <p>FBI officials also reportedly sent out a private industry notification (PIN) warning companies that Iranian attackers are attempting to buy stolen data regarding email messages and network information on underground forums. They also warned companies that have had data stolen to watch out for future attacks.</p> <p>The cyber conflict demonstrates why private industry and government need to work together, said Mike Wiacek, CEO and co-founder at security-monitoring firm Stairwell, in a statement sent to Dark Reading.</p> <p>"No single party, whether it is a company or a country, can solve problems of this magnitude on their own," he said. "The ability to recursively identify threats whether past, present or future, and creating defenses that are imperceptible to attackers are required. Fragmented viewpoints only benefit bad actors, so working together and sharing information and intelligence is absolutely critical."</p> |

Iran has dramatically increased its online capabilities since the US and Israel reportedly sabotaged the nation's nuclear program using the Stuxnet worm in 2009. The US, Israel, and Saudi Arabia are popular targets of Iran.

In an analysis of Iran-linked groups published Nov. 16, Microsoft described eight different cyber operations groups either based in or working in the interests of Iran. Microsoft's naming schemes indicate the groups are Phosphorus, Rubidium, Curium, and five additional groups that designate developing clusters of activity that Microsoft has not yet named.

Microsoft's Threat Intelligence Center [noted a few trends](#) in the groups' operations. Iranian-backed groups are increasingly using ransomware, wipers, and other threats to disrupt targets, with six identified groups deploying ransomware during an attack, the company noted. The groups are also becoming more patient and persistent in their operations, especially in social engineering campaigns, but still use credential spraying and other brute-force attacks on their targets, Microsoft stated.

"As Iranian operators have adapted both their strategic goals and tradecraft, over time they have evolved into more competent threat actors capable of conducting a full spectrum of operations including information operations, disruption and destruction, [and] support to physical operations," Microsoft stated in its analysis.

The level of cyber operations between Iran and the US has increased as Iran has invested in more cyber capabilities and the US has allowed more aggressive actions as part of its Defend Forward policy. Iranian groups have been blamed for attacks including ransomware, disk wipers, mobile malware, phishing attacks, password spraying, the use of mass exploits, and attacks targeting supply chains.

Yet the increase in tensions will likely not deter Iran and could cause its own issues. Russian threat actors, for example, have taken over Iranian infrastructure so [attacks would seemingly be coming from Iran](#). Meanwhile, hacktivists [have taken credit](#) for many of the attacks for which Iran blames its rivals.

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Scam: most SS7 exploit service providers |
| SOURCE | https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/most-ss7-exploit-service-providers-on-dark-web-are-scammers/?&web_view=true |
| GIST | <p>The existence of Signaling System 7 (SS7) mobile telephony protocol vulnerabilities is something security researchers warned about in 2016, and it only took a year before the first attacks exploiting them were observed.</p> <p>In the years that followed, governments exploited SS7 flaws to track individuals abroad, and hackers used them to hijack Telegram and email accounts.</p> <p>Apart from SMS, the SS7 security gaps can be exploited to intercept or forward calls, 2FA codes, locate devices, spoof SMS, and more.</p> <p>But are these hacking services as abundant as rumored, or is the dark web full of scammers that are merely waiting to snatch the money of aspiring spies?</p> <p>An investigation on availability</p> <p>Analysts at SOS Intelligence have searched the dark web for providers of SS7 exploitation services and found 84 unique onion domains claiming to offer them.</p> <p>After narrowing down the results to those that appeared to be still active, they ended up with only the following four:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SS7 Exploiter• SS7 ONLINE Exploiter• SS7 Hack |

- Dark Fox Market

All four claim to offer SMS interception and spoofing, location tracking, and call interception and redirection.

By analyzing the network topology data for these sites, the researchers found that some of them were relatively isolated, not having many inbound links.

This is not a good indication of the reliability and credibility of the site and is typically an indication of recently set-up scamming platforms.

Moreover, the SS7 Hack site appears copied from a clearnet website created in 2021, so it looks like a scam.

Upon trying to use its SS7 exploit kit, hoping for the implementation of an API mirroring function, the researchers got nothing as the service was offline.

On the Dark Fox Market platform, which charges \$180 for each targeted phone number, researchers found the same demo videos uploaded by Russian users on YouTube in 2016.

These were most likely stolen from YouTube and had no relevance to the Dark Fox Market platform, which offers no working SS7 exploitation service anyway.

Despite all that, by analyzing the provided cryptocurrency wallets of these platforms, SOS Intelligence found that the scammers are making significant amounts of money.

Real SS7 exploit services hidden

The above doesn't mean that there are no SS7 exploitation services on the dark web, but rather that the real ones are hidden behind membership-only hacking forums and marketplaces such as World Market.

As is usually the case on the dark web, the first search results that one can find on the "surface" typically lead to scams.

One would have to dig deeper to get the real deal, but this never eliminates the chances of still landing on the receiving end of a scam.

Sophisticated threat actors have access to cellphone data through affiliations or [their own operations](#), so they don't need to search for providers of SS7 exploit services.

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Russian hackers collaborating w/Chinese |
| SOURCE | https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/russian-ransomware-gangs-start-collaborating-with-chinese-hackers/?&web_view=true |
| GIST | <p>There's some unusual activity brewing on Russian-speaking cybercrime forums, where hackers appear to be reaching out to Chinese counterparts for collaboration.</p> <p>These attempts to enlist Chinese threat actors are mainly seen on the RAMP hacking forum, which is encouraging Mandarin-speaking actors to participate in conversations, share tips, and collaborate on attacks.</p> <p>Chinese users in Russian forums</p> <p>According to a new report by Flashpoint, high-ranking users and RAMP administrators are now actively attempting to communicate with new forum members in machine-translated Chinese.</p> |

The forum has reportedly had at least thirty new user registrations that appear to come from China, so this could be the beginning of something notable.

The researchers suggest that the most probable cause is that Russian ransomware gangs seek to build alliances with Chinese actors to launch cyber-attacks against U.S. targets, trade vulnerabilities, or even recruit new talent for their Ransomware-as-a-Service (RaaS) operations.

A threat analyst told BleepingComputer earlier this month that this initiative was started by a RAMP admin known as Kajit, who claims to have recently spent some time in China and can speak the language.

In the prior version of RAMP, he had intimated that he would be inviting Chinese threat actors to the forum, which appears to now be taking place.

However, Russian hackers attempting to collaborate with Chinese threat actors is not limited to the RAMP hacking forum as Flashpoint has also seen similar collaboration on the XSS hacking forum.

"In the screenshot below, XSS user "hoffman" greets two forum members who revealed themselves as Chinese," explains the [new research](#) by Flashpoint.

"The threat actor asks them if they could provide information about ransomware and purchasing various kinds of system vulnerabilities. The language seems to be machine-translated Chinese."

Based on prior history related to RAMP admins, Flashpoint underlines that there's always the possibility of this being simply a smokescreen, with no real Chinese users having joined RAMP.

Last month, a RAMP admin known as 'Orange' or 'boriselcin' and who ran the "Groove" site, published a post [calling on threat actors to attack the USA](#).

After the media covered this post, including BleepingComputer, the Groove actor claimed that the operation was fake from the beginning and was created to troll and manipulate the media and security researchers.

Security researchers from [McAfee and Intel 471 believe](#) that this is likely just the threat actor trying to cover up the fact that the actor's attempted ransomware-as-a-service did not work as planned.

Due to this, the RAMP admin's prior actions require us to treat anything they say with some skepticism.

However, the Conti ransomware operation recently posted to the RAMP forum to recruit affiliates and buy initial access to networks. In a screenshot shared with BleepingComputer, the gang says they normally only work with Russian-speaking hackers but are making an exception for Chinese-speaking threat actors out of respect for the RAMP admin.

"This ad is in Russian, because we only work with Russian speakers. BUT, out of respect for the admin, we will make an exception for Sino-speaking users and even translate this message in Chinese (you can even duplicate it in Mandarin and Canotonese!)"- Conti ransomware operation.

As such, it does appear that the RAMP forum is actively inviting Chinese-speaking threat actors to participate in conversations and attacks.

RAMP still growing

Now that RAMP is back online, it appears to be steadily growing, despite the DDOSing waves it had sustained soon after its launch.

RAMP was [set up last summer](#) by a core member of the original Babuk ransomware gang, aiming to serve as a new place to leak valuable data stolen from cyberattacks and recruit ransomware affiliates.

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| | <p>A notable case of such a leak came in September when a RAMP admin posted 498,908 Fortinet VPN credentials to access 12,856 devices on various corporate networks.</p> <p>While many of these credentials were old, security researchers stated that many of the credentials were still valid and allowed the RAMP forum to build a reputation in the field.</p> <p>Flashpoint reports that RAMP has reached its third iteration, using a new .onion domain and is requiring all former users to re-register.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Intel chip flaw puts slew of gadgets at risk |
| SOURCE | https://www.wired.com/story/intel-chip-flaw-puts-gadgets-at-risk/ |
| GIST | <p>INTEL IS FIXING a vulnerability that unauthorized people with physical access can exploit to install malicious firmware on a chip to defeat a variety of measures, including protections provided by Bitlocker, trusted platform modules, anti-copying restrictions, and others.</p> <p>The vulnerability—present in Pentium, Celeron, and Atom CPUs on the Apollo Lake, Gemini Lake, and Gemini Lake Refresh platforms—allows skilled hackers with possession of an affected chip to run it in debug and testing modes used by firmware developers. Intel and other chipmakers go to great lengths to prevent such access by unauthorized people.</p> <p>Once in developer mode, an attacker can extract the key used to encrypt data stored in the TPM enclave and, in the event TPM is being used to store a Bitlocker key, defeat the latter protection as well. An adversary could also bypass code-signing restrictions that prevent unauthorized firmware from running in the Intel Management Engine, a subsystem inside vulnerable CPUs, and from there permanently backdoor the chip.</p> <p>While the attack requires the attacker to have brief physical access to the vulnerable device, that’s precisely the scenario TPM, Bitlocker, and codesigning are designed to mitigate. The entire process takes about 10 minutes.</p> <p>Each Intel CPU has a unique key used to generate follow-on keys for things like Intel’s TPM, Enhanced Privacy ID, and other protections that rely on the features built into Intel silicon. This unique key is known as the "fuse encryption key" or the “chipset key fuse.”</p> <p>“We found out that you can extract this key from security fuses,” Maxim Goryachy, one of the researchers who discovered the vulnerability, told me. “Basically, this key is encrypted, but we also found the way to decrypt it, and it allows us to execute arbitrary code inside the management engine, extract bitlocker/tpm keys, etc.”</p> <p>A blog post published Monday expands on the things hackers might use the exploit for. Mark Ermolov, one of the researchers who discovered the vulnerability, wrote:</p> <p><i>One example of a real threat is lost or stolen laptops that contain confidential information in encrypted form. Using this vulnerability, an attacker can extract the encryption key and gain access to information within the laptop. The bug can also be exploited in targeted attacks across the supply chain. For example, an employee of an Intel processor-based device supplier could, in theory, extract the Intel CSME [converged security and management engine] firmware key and deploy spyware that security software would not detect. This vulnerability is also dangerous because it facilitates the extraction of the root encryption key used in Intel PTT (Platform Trust Technology) and Intel EPID (Enhanced Privacy ID) technologies in systems for protecting digital content from illegal copying. For example, a number of Amazon e-book models use Intel EPID-based protection for digital rights management. Using this vulnerability, an intruder might extract the root EPID key from a device (e-book), and then, having compromised Intel EPID technology, download electronic materials from providers in file form, copy, and distribute them.</i></p> |

Bloated, Complex Tertiary Systems

Over the past few years, researchers have exploited a host of firmware and performance features in Intel products to defeat fundamental security guarantees the company makes about its CPUs.

In October 2020, the same team of researchers [extracted the secret key](#) that encrypts updates to an assortment of Intel CPUs. Having a decrypted copy of an update may allow hackers to reverse-engineer it and learn precisely how to exploit the hole it's patching. The key may also allow parties other than Intel—say, a malicious hacker or a hobbyist—to update chips with their own microcode, although that customized version wouldn't survive a reboot.

In the past two years, researchers have also uncovered [at least four vulnerabilities](#) in SGX, short for Software Guard eXtensions, which acts as an in-silicon digital vault for securing users' most sensitive secrets.

Intel has also shipped large numbers of CPUs with critical [flaws in Boot Guard](#), the protection that prevents unauthorized people from running malicious firmware during the boot process. Researchers have also found [unpatchable holes](#) in the Converged Security and Management Engine, which implements the Intel Trusted Platform Module.

Intel has added the features as a way to differentiate its CPUs from competitors. Concerns about the cost, performance overhead, and unreliability of these features has sent [Google](#) and many other organizations in search of alternatives when building trusted computing bases (TCB) for protecting sensitive data.

"In my view, Intel's record on delivering a worthy Trusted Compute Base, particularly around the ME [management engine] is disappointing, and that's being charitable," security researcher Kenn White wrote in an email. "This work further validates Google and other large tech companies' decision five-plus years ago to jettison Intel's built-in management stack for bespoke, dramatically skimmed-down TCBs. When you don't have bloated complex tertiary systems to maintain and harden, you get the added benefit of no debugging paths for an attacker to exploit that complexity."

Since the beginning of 2018, Intel has also been besieged by a steady stream of variants of attack classes [known as Spectre and Meltdown](#). Both attack classes abuse a performance enhancement known as speculative execution to allow hackers to access passwords, encryption keys, and other data that's supposed to be off-limits. While the bugs have bitten numerous chipmakers, Intel has been stung particularly hard by Spectre and Meltdown because many of its chips have relied more heavily on speculative execution than competing ones do.

Intel recently published [this advisory](#), which rates the vulnerability severity as high. The updates arrive in a UEFI BIOS update that's available from OEMs or motherboard manufacturers. There's no evidence that the bug, tracked as CVE-2021-0146, has ever been actively exploited in the wild, and the difficulty involved would prevent all but the most skilled hackers from being able to do so.

"Users should keep systems up to date with the latest firmware and guard systems against unauthorized physical access," Intel officials said in a statement. "Systems where end of manufacturing was performed by the OEM and where Intel Firmware Version Control technology (hardware anti-rollback) was enabled are at far less risk."

Vulnerabilities like this one aren't likely to ever be exploited in indiscriminate attacks but could, at least theoretically, be used in cases where adversaries with considerable resources are pursuing high-value targets. By all means install the update on any affected machines, but don't sweat it if you don't get around to it for a week or two.

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| HEADLINE | 11/18 Environmentalists alarm: cryptocurrency |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/nov/18/cryptocurrency-bitcoin-environmentalist-alarm-us-politicians |

The incoming mayor of [New York](#) City thinks cryptocurrency and blockchain technology are the future. Eric Adams has advocated to reshape the city into a crypto hotspot, with crypto being taught in schools. He also plans to take his first three paychecks in bitcoin payment.

Adams said in an interview that bitcoin was the “new way of paying for goods and services throughout the entire globe” and that schools “must” teach the technology behind it, as well as “this new way of thinking”.

He’s not alone in America. The mayor of Miami announced in February that the city plans to accept tax payments in bitcoin and let employees draw their salary in the cryptocurrency. Crypto conferences like [Bitcoin](#) 2021 – billed as the biggest bitcoin event in history – have chosen Miami as their host city because the area has rolled out the red carpet for this industry.

But not everyone is onboard with the crypto giddiness being expressed by America’s political class. Mining cryptocurrency is notoriously environmentally unfriendly, and in an era of rapid climate crisis, increasing the use of the technology could be hazardous.

According to Digiconomist, a single bitcoin transaction uses the same amount of power that the average American household consumes in a month – which equals roughly a million times more in carbon emissions than a single credit card transaction. And globally, the [carbon footprint of bitcoin](#) mining is greater than that of the United Arab Emirates and falls just below the Netherlands’.

People should be concerned about the environmental and climate impacts of “proof-of-work” cryptocurrency mining such as bitcoin, said Benjamin A Jones, an economist at the University of New Mexico.

Such currencies require miners to compete to validate transactions on their blockchains, and that takes enormous, power-hungry servers. Bitcoin mining uses energy predominantly generated from fossil fuels, which creates air pollution and carbon emissions, said Jones.

“These pollution emissions are harmful to human health outcomes and the carbon emissions lead to climate damages,” he added.

Jones recently co-authored [a paper](#) that estimated that in 2018 each \$1 of bitcoin value created was associated with \$0.49 in health and climate damages in the US – meaning that the negative human health costs and climate impacts of bitcoin mining in the US were roughly half as large as the per-coin value.

“This is a tremendous negative externality of bitcoin mining that is imposing significant societal costs on all of us,” he said, “even on those who do not use bitcoin or cryptocurrencies.”

Since mining crypto requires so much power, it is often situated near the cheapest, least-regulated sources of energy. The damages Jones and his colleagues pinpointed arise from increased pollutants generated from the burning of fossil fuels used to produce energy. Exposure to pollutants such as fine particulate matter has been linked to increased risk of premature death.

Last month, a group of 70 climate, economic and racial justice groups wrote a [letter to Congress](#) urging leaders to address the climate implications of cryptocurrency. The letter cites the extreme levels of carbon emissions, energy consumption and electronic waste generated by cryptocurrency usage, production and mining, especially the deeply energy-intensive proof of work process used by the two largest cryptocurrencies, bitcoin and ethereum.

Crypto-related mining already has an impact on local communities such as Seneca Lake, New York, and Limestone and Jonesborough in Tennessee, through environmental destruction, noise pollution and plummeting property value, the letter says. Residents say that Seneca Lake has heated up so much due to the increased power demand that the lake feels [like a hot tub](#). The power plant there is already increasing its carbon emissions, up almost [tenfold in 2020](#).

Texas has a problem too. After China's crackdown on bitcoin mining, many miners moved to Texas, where the electrical grid is deregulated. Environmental groups say the extra pressure on Texas's grid could cause more blackouts of the sort that happened in February, when households were plunged into dark and freezing circumstances.

Other places around the country are restarting [coal-fired plants](#) to power bitcoin mining.

"Cryptocurrency's destructive impact on the environment is just another example of how corporations in a financialized economy will stop at nothing to create profits for investors, and how communities of color will ultimately pay the price," Erika Thi Patterson of the Action Center on Race and the Economy wrote in the letter.

"Cryptocurrencies and their miners rely on harmful fuels like coal that produce toxic emissions linked to asthma, cancer, acid rain, and climate change. In doing so, cryptocurrency is exacerbating decades of environmental racism and fueling climate chaos."

The deputy legislative director of the Sierra Club, Patrick Drupp, said: "It is beyond absurd that, as we speak and as the climate crisis only deepens, fossil fuel power plants are having their lives extended and even reopened in order to virtually 'mine' cryptocurrency. At a time when financial regulators ought to be doing everything possible to help tackle the climate crisis, it's clear that the status quo of letting bitcoin and other cryptocurrency miners pollute our climate and communities at an exponential rate is unsustainable, unwise and in need of urgent action."

Embracing cryptocurrencies means that America's political leaders and policymakers must confront the environmental and climate damages generated through mining operations, says Jones. "For bitcoin in particular, one cannot embrace the coin without also acknowledging its impacts on the environment."

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Cities envision computer chip boom |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/17/technology/samsung-semiconductor-chip-production.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage&section=Technology |
| GIST | <p>TAYLOR, Texas — The shortage of computer chips has zapped energy from the global economy, punishing industries as varied as automakers and medical device manufacturers and contributing to fears about high inflation.</p> <p>But many states and cities in America are starting to see a silver lining: the possibility that efforts to sharply increase chip production in the United States will lead to a busy chip factory in their backyard. And they are racing to get a piece of the potential boom.</p> <p>One of those towns is Taylor, a Texas city of about 17,000 about a 40-minute drive northeast of Austin. Leaders here are pulling out all the stops to get a \$17 billion Samsung plant that the company plans to build in the United States starting early next year.</p> <p>The city, its school district and the county plan to offer Samsung hundreds of millions of dollars in financial incentives, including tax rebates. The community also has arranged for water to be piped in from an adjacent county to be used by the plant.</p> <p>But Taylor is not alone. Officials in Arizona and in Genesee County in upstate New York are also trying to woo the company. So, too, are politicians in nearby Travis County, home to Austin, where Samsung already has a plant. Locations in all three states "offered robust property tax abatement" and funds to build out infrastructure for the plant, Samsung said in a filing. Congress is considering whether to offer its own subsidies to chip makers that build in the United States.</p> |

Where Samsung's plant will land remains anyone's guess. The company says it is still weighing where to put it. A decision is expected to be announced any day.

The federal government has urged companies like Samsung, one of the world's largest makers of the high-tech components, to build new plants in the United States, calling it an economic and national security imperative. Intel broke ground on two plants in Arizona in September and could announce the location for a planned manufacturing campus by the end of the year.

This could just be a warm-up act. The Senate passed a bill to provide chip makers \$52 billion in subsidies this year, a plan supported by the Biden administration that would be Washington's biggest investment in industrial policy in decades. The House has yet to consider it. Nine governors said in a letter to congressional leaders that the funding would "provide a new, powerful tool in our states' economic development toolboxes."

In Taylor, even the possibility of Samsung's arrival is generating hope. Business owners say it would bring more patrons to the local brewery and to the quiet downtown. Parents think the factory's cutting-edge assembly line would inspire the town's high school students. Residents believe land prices would rise quickly — values have already edged up in recent months just on the possibility, one real estate agent said.

"Something like this can be a shot in the arm," said Ian Davis, the chief executive of Texas Beer Company, which opened a taproom in downtown Taylor five years ago.

The vast majority of semiconductors — an industry that generated nearly \$450 billion in revenue in 2020 — are made in Taiwan, South Korea and mainland China. The United States controls just 12 percent of global production.

Lawmakers say the chip shortages illuminate how America's limited role in the industry puts the nation's economy in a precarious position. Politicians also fear that China is taking steps to increase its control of global semiconductor supplies, potentially leaving the United States at a technological disadvantage against a geopolitical rival that would have national security implications.

But the cities' attempts to lure the plants are raising questions about how far communities should go — and how much taxpayer money they should pay — to get a piece of the high-tech economy.

Chandler, Ariz., approved up to \$30 million in water and road improvements to support an Intel plant that broke ground in September. Phoenix will spend roughly \$200 million on infrastructure for a new factory by the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, another major chip maker. When the company announced the plant in 2020, it said subsidies were crucial to its plans.

Critics of corporate tax incentives say the money could be better spent on basic infrastructure and on public schools. They say cities might be spending taxpayer funds needlessly, because factors like the availability of talent and of natural resources are more important to chip makers than subsidies. And they argue that cities end up sacrificing the most important thing a big industrial project can contribute: tax revenue.

"There's clearly benefits," said Nathan Jensen, a professor at the University of Texas at Austin who studies subsidy programs. "The problem is if you're literally giving away a lot of those benefits to land the company."

Many residents in Taylor said that was the price they needed to pay to supercharge the city's revival.

Taylor — named for a railroad executive — was once a hub for shipping cattle and cotton. Louie Mueller Barbecue opened in 1949 and still draws carnivores with its brisket and beef ribs.

But in recent decades, residents said, Taylor's downtown has lost some vitality.

They have tried to change that by luring newer small businesses to the city and by renovating an old building that now houses Mr. Davis's taproom, converted lofts and a coffee shop that serves babka and chocolate-tahini brownies. Another group repurposed the town's old high school to house small businesses including restaurants and a pinball bar. The city spruced up a downtown park.

"Bringing that in, something that's going to be here indefinitely, the revenue that it brings for our city and for our schools, particularly, is going to be enormous," said Susan Green, a Taylor resident who has children in its school system.

Steve Adler, the mayor of Austin, said subsidies that Austin gave to Samsung in the 1990s had had a positive effect on the city, which has seen rapid growth in recent years. Tesla and Oracle recently moved their corporate headquarters to Austin, and Facebook and Apple have large operations there. By one estimate, the city is the nation's top site for commercial real estate investment.

Austin and its surrounding county have held their own talks with Samsung about the new factory the company has planned. Mr. Adler said he wanted the city to be a competitive site for the Samsung plant.

"It certainly paid a huge benefit to our city and our region, having them here," Mr. Adler said about Samsung. But Pat Garofalo, the director of state and local policy for the American Economic Liberties Project, a liberal group that is critical of large tech companies, said the money would be better spent on projects that made a city attractive to a wide variety of businesses — like public schools — instead of on a single suitor.

He said the manufacturers sensed the "very real problem" of the semiconductor shortage and "are using it to capitalize on the tendency among state and local officials to pay a lot of taxpayer money for hosting one of these facilities."

Vanessa Fuentes, a member of the Austin City Council, said residents of her district worried about being pushed out of their homes or seeing corner stores replaced by expensive grocery stores. She said the city had the "upper hand" in dealing with tech companies and should make sure that any deal it cut with tech companies did enough for existing residents.

"If it's not good enough, then we don't need to do it, quite frankly," she said. "Because there's too much at risk of what could happen with this type of growth, in terms of displacement specifically."

In Taylor, Samsung's boosters believe that they can manage those concerns if they get the project.

"Yes, it'll be more traffic. Yes, there'll be some rising property values," Mr. Davis said. "But I think it will also help create jobs."

To sweeten the deal, Mr. Davis recently made another offer to the chip maker at a public meeting: He'll make a Samsung pale ale.

"I think having 5,000 daily construction workers patronize all these small businesses — pros will outweigh the cons by a mile," he said.

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| HEADLINE | 11/16 Israel firm spyware linked to attacks |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/nov/16/israeli-firm-candiru-spyware-linked-to-attacks-on-websites-uk-middle-east?&web_view=true |
| GIST | Canada-based researchers say new evidence suggests Candiru's software used to target critics of autocratic regimes |

Researchers have found new evidence that suggests spyware made by an Israeli company that was [recently blacklisted](#) in the US has been used to target critics of Saudi Arabia and other autocratic regimes, including some readers of a London-based news website.

A report by Montreal-based researchers from Slovakian company Eset, an internet security firm, found links between attacks against high-profile websites in the Middle East and UK, and the Israeli company Candiru, which has been called Israel's "[most mysterious cyberwarfare company](#)".

Candiru and NSO Group, a much more prominent Israeli surveillance company, were both added to a US blacklist this month after the Biden administration took the rare step of accusing the firms of acting against US national security interests.

The Eset report revealed new information about so-called "watering hole attacks". In such attacks, spyware users launch malware against ordinary websites that are known to attract readers or users who are considered "targets of interest" by the user of the malware.

The sophisticated attacks allow the malware user to identify characteristics about the individuals who have visited the website, including what kind of browser and operating system they are using. In some cases the malware user can then launch an exploit that allows them to take over an individual target's computer.

Unlike NSO Group's signature spyware, which is called Pegasus and infects mobile phones, Candiru's malware is believed by researchers to infect computers. The company appears to be named after a parasitic freshwater catfish that can be found in the Amazon.

The researchers found that the websites that were "known targets" of this kind of attack included Middle East Eye, a London-based news website, and multiple websites associated with government ministries in Iran and Yemen.

Candiru did not respond to the Guardian's request for comment.

Middle East Eye condemned the attacks. In a statement, its editor-in-chief, David Hearst, said the outlet was no stranger to attempts to take the website down by state and non-state actors.

"Substantial sums of money have been spent trying to take us out. This has not stopped us reporting what is going on in all corners of the region and I am confident that they will not stop us in future," he said.

Once websites are compromised, researchers at Eset say, they are considered "jumping off sites" that help malware users target individuals. In other words, not every individual who visited one of the compromised websites would have been in danger of being hacked, but users of the malware are believed to have used the websites as a starting point to help identify a much smaller group of individuals who were then targeted.

Matthieu Faou, who uncovered the campaigns, said Eset developed a custom in-house system in 2018 to uncover "watering holes" on high-profile websites. In July 2020, the system notified them that an Iranian embassy website in Abu Dhabi had been tainted with malicious code.

"Our curiosity was aroused by the high-profile nature of the targeted website, and in the following weeks we noticed that other websites with connections to the Middle East were also targeted," Faou said.

The "threat group" then "went quiet" until it resurfaced in January 2021 and was active until late summer in 2021, when all the websites that were observed to have been victims of attacks were then "cleaned", Eset said.

Eset said it believed hacking activities ended in late July 2021 after a report by researchers at Citizen Lab, released in conjunction with Microsoft, detailed Candiru's alleged surveillance activities. That report

accused Candiru of selling spyware to governments linked to fake Black Lives Matter and Amnesty International websites that were used to hack targets.

In the July 2021 report, Citizen Lab, a research group affiliated with the University of Toronto, said the Tel Aviv-based Candiru made “untraceable” spyware that could infect computers and phones.

At the time, Candiru declined to comment.

Microsoft said in July that it appeared that Candiru sold the spyware that enabled the hacks, and that the governments generally chose who to target and ran the operations themselves. The company also announced at the time that it had disabled the “cyberweapons” of Candiru and built protections against the malware, including issuing a Windows software update.

There is little public information available about Candiru, which was founded in 2014 and has undergone several name changes. In 2017 the company was selling its malware to clients in the Gulf, western Europe and Asia, according to a [lawsuit](#) reported in an Israeli newspaper. Candiru may have deals with Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, Forbes has [reported](#).

Microsoft reported that it had found victims of the spyware in Israel and Iran. Citizen Lab said it was able to identify a computer that had been hacked by Candiru’s malware, and then used that hard drive to extract a copy of the firm’s Windows spyware. The owner of the computer was a “politically active” individual in western Europe, it said.

This month Candiru made headlines after the Biden administration announced it had added the company to the [commerce department’s entity list](#), a blacklist usually reserved for America’s worst enemies, including Chinese and Russian hackers.

In its press release, the commerce department said it had evidence that Candiru developed and supplied spyware to foreign governments that used it to maliciously target government officials, journalists, businesspeople, activists, academics and embassy workers. The tools also helped to enable foreign governments to conduct “transnational repression”, the department said.

Candiru has not commented on its placement on the entity list.

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 UK NCSC fighting hacking epidemic |
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| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/nov/17/uk-tackles-record-cyber-incidents-as-russian-ransomware-attacks-increase |
| GIST | <p>The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) said it tackled a record number of cyber incidents in the UK over the last year, with ransomware attacks originating from Russia dominating its activities.</p> <p>The cybersecurity agency said it had helped deal with a 7.5% increase in cases in the year to August, fuelled by the surge of criminal hackers seizing control of corporate data and demanding payment in cryptocurrency for its return.</p> <p>Paul Chichester, director of operations, said that “ransomware has certainly dominated a significant portion of year” and that the hacking epidemic had become “global as a story in the last 12 months”.</p> <p>Criminal hackers, based in Russia or in nearby Russian speaking territories, successfully targeted organisations such as the London borough of Hackney and the celebrity jeweller Graff in the UK in the past year.</p> <p>In May, in the US, oil and gas supplier Colonial Pipeline suspended operations after a ransomware attack left it unable to access key data. It eventually paid \$5m (£3.7m) to the hackers to regain control of its systems.</p> |

Central government and the UK public sector do not pay cyber ransoms, although fixing the damage can take months. Rebuilding Hackney's affected systems cost around £10m, with some of the costs met by central government.

However, NCSC officials said they had no power to prevent the payment of ransoms – often around £1m a time – by businesses to hackers, even though doing so ensured the criminal activity continued.

“We would say we would prefer people not to pay because that's what keeps the UK safest collectively,” said Lindy Cameron, the director of the organisation, who acknowledged that commercial pressures meant some businesses felt they had little choice to meet the hackers' demands for money.

British ministers and officials have considered banning cyber ransom payments, but it is understood that is unlikely to be implemented, partly because of concern it would discourage businesses from reporting attacks.

Many companies are able to claim on their cyber insurance, although once hackers have access to a corporate system they can seek the insurance policy to work out how much the company is able to pay.

Last month the head UK spy agency [GCHQ](#), NCSC's parent organisation, disclosed that the number of ransomware attacks on British institutions has [doubled in the past year](#). The impact on the British economy is estimated to run into the hundreds of millions of pounds, mostly stemming from the costs of immobilising businesses.

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| HEADLINE | 11/16 Group aim: expose Iran inhumane activities |
| SOURCE | https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-hacktivists-prison-abuses/31564796.html |
| GIST | <p>A hacktivist group calling itself Edalat-e Ali (Ali's Justice) has rocked the Iranian establishment in recent months by leaking videos and confidential documents that appear to show the systematic mistreatment of inmates at Iran's most notorious prison.</p> <p>But to this point the group has revealed little about its makeup or goals.</p> <p>Now, in an exclusive interview with RFE/RL's Radio Farda, Edalat-e Ali has for the first time said that it is composed of Iranians living and working inside Iran, is intent on exposing alleged human rights abuses in the country, and seeks the release of political prisoners.</p> <p>The alleged abusive practices at Tehran's Evin prison exposed by Edalat-e Ali prompted outcry from rights groups outside the country. It also forced an admission of the veracity of a raft of leaked videos and even an apology from Iran's authorities.</p> <p>But the leaks also led to speculation from Iran observers that the hacktivist group might be working from abroad, and possibly at the behest of an unidentified foreign state.</p> <p>Edalat-e Ali rebutted that suggestion in an interview with RFE/RL last week, while expounding on its aims and the help it gets in revealing alleged prison abuses from "compatriots" inside Iran.</p> <p>The group answered written questions from RFE/RL by way of an established contact using a secure messaging app. The hacking group has used the channel to share videos and documents with RFE/RL in recent months.</p> <p>While senior Iranian officials have confirmed the authenticity of the string of videos leaked by Edalat-e Ali, which were also shared with other media outlets beginning in late August, there has been no public reaction to confidential documents disclosed to RFE/RL earlier this month.</p> |

"Our goal is to expose the regime's inhumane activities against the Iranian people and not allow the regime to hide," the group said in written comments. "We want the release of political prisoners."

The footage that Edalat-e Ali obtained through hacked CCTV cameras inside Evin prison show a host of abuses, including overcrowding and other inhumane conditions in cells, and assaults on prisoners by guards and other inmates.

The footage -- which included what appeared to be scenes of an incapacitated elderly inmate being dragged up a flight of stairs and scenes from within the prison's control room -- [led to an apology](#) from the head of Iran's penal system and an investigation.

Iranian Prisons Organization head Mohammad Mehdi Hajmohammadi wrote in an August 24 [tweet](#) that he personally accepted responsibility for the "unacceptable behavior" exposed by the videos and was committed to working to prevent a repeat of such "tragic events."

Iran's top judiciary official, Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei, ordered an investigation and state media affiliated with political hard-liners said the results of the probe should be published.

The confidential documents that Edalat-e Ali subsequently released, meanwhile, detailed how Evin prison authorities allegedly took harsh steps to break hunger strikes by prominent prisoners, including the denial of visitation rights and the blockage of phone access.

"These confidential documents from inside Evin prison are conclusive evidence of human rights violations and cannot be ignored," Edalat-e Ali told RFE/RL. "They are evidence of the Iranian people's cry for international attention and human rights, revealing the true face of the regime and [President] Ebrahim Raisi," an ultraconservative who was the former judiciary head, the group added.

Asked about prison official Hajmohammadi's admission of responsibility, Edalat-e Ali described his apology as "crocodile tears." "Our success and determination to expose [prison abuse to] the world was such that it did not give the regime a chance to deny, conceal, or lie," the group said, adding that Hajmohammadi had no choice but to apologize.

"Did they change their attitude toward the prisoners the day after the apology?" the group asked. "Did he [Hajmohammadi] release the political prisoners who are being held without an honest trial?"

The real reason for the apology, Edalat-e Ali suggested, was because authorities "failed to secure and protect its computer systems against our cyberattack."

The hacktivist group also dismissed suggestions that it might be a foreign operation working under the guise of an Iranian one. "We, an Iranian group, are determined to reveal the true face of this regime in any way, using all our capabilities and those of our allies," the group said. "We, the people of Iran, must think for ourselves and not give anyone the opportunity to decide for us and our future."

Edalat-e Ali went on to explain that the videos it provided to RFE/RL and other media outlets were "obtained by hacking into the computer systems of Evin prison, and we could not have been successful without the cooperation and help of our very brave compatriots who risked their lives."

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| HEADLINE | 11/16 FBI: bitcoin price sustains ransomware |
| SOURCE | https://www.marketwatch.com/story/bitcoin-price-boom-is-helping-sustain-ransomware-hackers-fbi-says-11637089437 |
| GIST | Ransomware actors have not eased their attacks on U.S. companies and institutions in recent months and high cryptocurrency prices are helping to bolster cyber criminal networks, a key Federal Bureau of Investigation official told lawmakers on Tuesday. |

“In the last six months, we have not seen a decrease in the amount of frequency of reporting of ransomware attacks,” Bryan Vorndran, assistant director of the FBI’s Cyber Division, told the House Committee on Oversight and Reform. “We attribute that to the simple fact that it’s incredibly lucrative for the criminals. That’s partially due to the valuation of virtual currency, but it’s partially due to the vulnerability of our systems and in our infrastructure.”

The price of bitcoin, the virtual currency used for most high-profile ransomware payments, has increased nearly 300% over the past year from less than \$18,000 to more than \$60,000 today.

The hearing was part of a congressional investigation into a spate of multimillion dollar ransomware attacks on major U.S. companies in 2021, including those on CNA Financial Corporation, Colonial Pipeline Co. and the U.S. division of JBS Foods. CNA ultimately paid a \$40 million bitcoin ransom to cybercriminals to recover its network, while Colonial Pipeline paid \$4.4 million and JBS paid \$11 million, according to the committee.

The hearing also featured testimony from White House National Cyber Director Chris Inglis and Brandon Wales, executive director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, and all three witnesses urged Congress to pass legislation that would require private companies to notify the government when they are faced with a ransomware attack.

Congress is currently debating whether to [mandate such notification](#) and whether companies should be required to notify the government within 24 or 72 hours, and the witnesses urged the committee to support a faster notification requirement.

“The faster we get the information, the faster we can deploy a local cyber threat expert to victims to work, track, freeze and seize funds taken and ultimately hold cybercriminals accountable,” the FBI’s Vorndran said. “Twenty-four hours probably wouldn’t seem like a big delay to most people, but the help we can offer within that time can be the difference between a business or a piece of critical infrastructure staying afloat or being crippled.”

The FBI has touted recent successes in recovering ransom funds of late, including the seizure in June of 64 bitcoin paid by Colonial Pipeline to hackers, then valued at about \$2.3 million, from a virtual wallet. Last Monday, [the DOJ announced](#) that it had arrested Ukrainian Yaroslav Vasinskyi and Russian Yevgeniy Polyanin, alleging them to be part of the REvil ransomware gang that perpetrated the attack on JBS. It also said that it had recovered \$6.1 million in ill-gotten gains from Polyanin.

National Cyber Director Inglis said Polyanin’s arrest, which occurred when he crossed the border into Poland, shows the U.S.’s diplomatic and offensive efforts to thwart cyber criminals are paying dividends. “Cyberspace is a borderless terrain, and therefore, as much as they can reach us we can reach them,” he said. “If we bring allies to bear, we can use jurisdiction in places like Poland and Romania to apprehend these criminals and bring them to justice using the courts of law that exists in the West.”

In January, international law enforcement agencies, including the FBI, announced that a joint effort had successfully taken down the EMOTET ransomware service by hacking it, gaining control of its infrastructure and “taking it down from the inside,” according to a Europol [press release](#).

The panelists stressed that despite these offensive successes, ransomware cannot be stopped without bolstering defenses at the government, corporate and individuals levels, as more than 90% of criminal breaches are the result of human error, like clicking on an infectious hyperlink. Inglis said institutions must make it a top priority to train their people on cyber hygiene.

“The vast majority of those people don’t intend to make those mistakes,” Inglis said, “They simply make them. They are not well equipped to make an appropriate choice at the moment.”

Terror Conditions

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| HEADLINE | 11/18 Extremists kill 25 southwest Niger |
| SOURCE | https://apnews.com/article/africa-niger-mali-west-africa-islamic-state-group-aaa6ce03a1f1b6c0c0a35ddd150a9045 |
| GIST | <p>NIAMEY, Niger (AP) — At least 25 people were killed by suspected extremist gunmen in southwest Niger, the government said Wednesday.</p> <p>Buildings were burned and ransacked in the attack earlier this week near Bakorat village along the border with Mali, Alkache Alhada, the interior minister said in a statement. The government called the attack cowardly and said security sweeps in the area are underway.</p> <p>This is the latest in a string of extremist violence linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group in the conflict-ridden West African nation, particularly along the border with Mali. Earlier this month suspected Islamic extremists ambushed a self-defense brigade in western Niger killing 69 people and in March, 137 people were killed by gunmen on motorcycles who attacked a series of villages along the border.</p> <p>While no group claimed responsibility for this week's attack, al-Qaida is most prominent in that part of Niger as it has operated there for many years, say conflict analysts.</p> <p>The attack signifies a continued rise of extremist violence in the Sahel, the region south of the Sahara Desert, said Laith Alkhouri, CEO of Intelonyx Intelligence Advisory.</p> <p>"It further denotes the lackluster security measures that keep the borders porous and provide terrorist groups like al-Qaida and ISIS, who've been competing for dominance, with opportunities to expand," he said.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Indonesia: militants try to infiltrate govt. |
| SOURCE | https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/indonesian/militants-infiltrate-indonesia-govt-organizations-11172021125251.html |
| GIST | <p>Jemaah Islamiyah militants have tried to infiltrate the Indonesian military, police and government ministries for more than a decade, a deputy at the country's counter-terrorism agency said Wednesday.</p> <p>The revelation came a day after police arrested three people suspected of involvement with JI, the group linked with al-Qaeda and that Indonesian authorities blamed for the 2002 Bali bombings – the country's deadliest terrorist attack to date.</p> <p>Ahmad Nurwakhid, deputy for prevention at the National Counter-Terrorism Agency (BNPT) said JI members were able to infiltrate government organizations and moderate Islamic groups because of a "remarkable" ability to blend in.</p> <p>"Since Para Wijayanto took over the leadership [in 2008], JI has undergone reorganization and changed its tactics by infiltrating state institutions and mass organizations," Nurwakhid told BenarNews.</p> <p>The official was referring to JI's emir, or leader, who was arrested in 2019 and was subsequently sentenced to seven years in prison last year for leading the outlawed organization.</p> <p>"It's very likely they [have tried to infiltrate] other religious organizations such as Muhammadiyah, NU [Nahdlatul Ulama], NGOs, sports groups and biking groups," Nurwakhid said. Muhammadiyah and NU are moderate Islamic groups.</p> <p>Nurwakhid said there had been no information of any attack plot by JI so far.</p> |

“We take action and prevent a terrorist attack before it occurs and we will continue to do so,” he said.

The counter-terror official said eight policepersons, five members of the military and 18 civil servants had been arrested for involvement in terrorism since 2010.

JI, the Southeast Asian affiliate of al-Qaeda, has not staged a major attack here since 2011.

Police have arrested 876 members of the group since the 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202 people, police said last month. But the number of JI members and sympathizers is estimated to be 10 times as many, with 67 JI-affiliated religious schools suspected to be breeding grounds for militants, they warned.

‘Nothing to do with MUI’

Among the three arrested on Tuesday was a top official at the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), the nation’s powerful semi-official board of Muslim scholars. MUI said the arrested man, Ahmad Zain An-Naja, who sat on its fatwa commission, had been suspended pending a police investigation.

The others arrested were Ahmad Farid Okbah, chairman of the little-known Islamic-oriented grouping Indonesian People’s Calling Party, and Anung Al-Hamat, a university lecturer, police said.

Zain and Farid were members of JI’s advisory council, while Anung was on its supervisory council, police added.

Farid was known to have spent time in Afghanistan at the behest of JI co-founder Abu Bakar Bashir, BNPT’s Nurwakhid said. Bashir, 83, was released from prison in January after serving nearly a decade of a 15-year-sentence on terror-related charges.

Zain, the anti-terror official said, is a graduate of the Bashir-founded Al-Mukmin Islamic boarding school in Solo, a city in Central Java. Zain also served as chairman of the sharia board of the Abdurrahman Bin Auf (BM ABA) charitable foundation which, according to police, had raised funds for JI.

MUI chairman Cholil Nafis said Zain was a member of the organization’s 75-member fatwa commission. A fatwa is a legal opinion or decree handed down by an Islamic religious leader.

“[Zain’s] alleged involvement in a terrorist network is a personal matter and has nothing to do with MUI,” Cholil told a press conference

National police spokesman Rusdi Hartono said that the arrest of the three on Tuesday was based on information from the questioning of other JI members arrested previously.

“We have taken law enforcement actions against those involved in Baitul Mal Abdurrahman Bin Auf, in Jakarta, Sumatra, North Sumatra, Lampung and Medan.” Rusdi said, referring to the charitable foundation at which Zain was sharia board chairman.

“Information obtained has been used to investigate the suspects,” he added.

The head of operational assistance at the anti-terror police unit Densus 88, Commissioner Aswin Siregar, denied some Muslim groups’ allegations that police were targeting Islamic clerics.

“This is purely due to the individuals’ involvement in the terror network. Anyone who is affiliated to or involved with a terrorist group, as long as there’s evidence, will be arrested. There is no persecution (of Muslim clerics),” he said.

JI’s goal is to ‘disguise their activities’

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| | <p>Many of an estimated 2,000 JI followers who took part in military training in Afghanistan have been active by joining social organizations, including those that advocate for environmental conservation, said Stanislaus Riyanta, a security researcher at the University of Indonesia.</p> <p>“Their goal is to disguise their activities and intentions, which is to take power. Maybe they are not a threat for now, but in the long term they are dangerous and could threaten [to undermine] the government,” he told BenarNews.</p> <p>A senior researcher from the Center for the Study of Radicalism and Deradicalization (PAKAR), Moh Adhe Bakti said JI has become more open by running businesses, charitable institutions, palm oil plantations, and joining mass organizations and government institutions.</p> <p>“They sent aid to Syria and Afghanistan and sent people there to build water facilities, but also sent their members to join military training there, under the pretext of charity,” Adhe told BenarNews.</p> <p>JI members do not believe in democracy even if they take part in democratic activities, he said.</p> <p>“JI’s dream is to establish an Islamic state. However, it is not certain whether it still embraces the ideology or whether it has changed now,” Adhe said.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 CSIS, RCMP don't share information well |
| SOURCE | https://www.nationalobserver.com/2021/11/17/news/csis-info-rcmp-extremist-probe-security-watchdog-threat |
| GIST | <p>Long-standing, systemic problems hampered co-operation between Canada's spy service and national police force on the investigation of an extremist threat, a new security watchdog report says.</p> <p>In its findings, the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency points to chronic information-sharing challenges for the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the RCMP.</p> <p>The review agency looked at how CSIS and the Mounties worked together on investigating extremists based in Canada, though details of the specific threat were stripped from a public version of the report.</p> <p>A key sticking point is the perennial concern that use of CSIS information in a criminal prosecution could endanger the spy service's secret sources and methods.</p> <p>The heavily censored version of the agency's February 2021 review says CSIS's formal disclosures of information to the RCMP on the extremist case were "very limited and not always useful."</p> <p>"CSIS intelligence has not been shared or used in a way that has significantly advanced the RCMP's investigations."</p> <p>The need to shield spy sources and methods complicates, and can even jeopardize, potential prosecutions, the report says.</p> <p>Known as the "intelligence-to-evidence" problem, this shared understanding guides the actions of both CSIS and the RCMP, the review agency notes.</p> <p>"Indeed, NSIRA observed a general reluctance on the part of both agencies to connect CSIS information to an RCMP investigation," the agency's report says.</p> <p>"An ordinary Canadian could be forgiven for wondering at a system in which one government agency in Ottawa has amassed a large collection of intelligence on a threat, while across town another government agency — one tasked with investigating and arresting suspected criminals — by and large does not receive and/or believes it cannot use that intelligence. Surely this state of affairs could be improved."</p> <p>#CSIS info-sharing with #RCMP in extremist probe 'very limited,' security watchdog says.</p> |

On the whole, the review agency found the two agencies had made "little progress" in addressing the threat under investigation. It recommended CSIS and the RCMP develop a properly resourced joint strategy to deal with the criminal activities related to the threat.

The report says although the findings were specific to the extremist investigation, the review agency had no reason to believe that the probe was atypical, meaning the review "provides insight into the more general state of the two agencies' relationship."

The current framework guiding CSIS-RCMP efforts, One Vision 2.0, has left fundamental issues related to the intelligence-to-evidence problem unresolved and "improvements are overdue," the review agency concludes.

A study of the CSIS-RCMP relationship completed in 2019, the Operational Improvement Review, made dozens of recommendations to foster better collaboration

In a written response to the latest report, CSIS and the RCMP say they support ongoing efforts to make needed changes to improve co-operation and information-sharing.

They say that as a result of the Operational Improvement Review, discussions between CSIS and the RCMP are more frequent and occur earlier in the process, which has reduced duplication of efforts.

The spy service and the Mounties have also agreed to put in place compatible secure communication systems so they can talk more safely to each other about classified matters.

CSIS and the RCMP remain committed to implementing the Operational Improvement Review recommendations as well as introducing One Vision 3.0, CSIS spokesman John Townsend said Tuesday.

"This complex work, however, is ongoing and challenges remain, particularly as it relates to the issue of intelligence and evidence. These significant challenges will require a whole-of-government approach in order to address."

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 NY ISIS supporter sentenced 30yrs |
| SOURCE | https://www.hstoday.us/federal-pages/doj/queens-isis-supporter-who-declared-i-am-a-terrorist-gets-30-years/ |
| GIST | <p>A New York man was sentenced today to 30 years in prison for attempting to provide material support and resources to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, aka ISIS. The defendant was also sentenced to 100 months, or more than eight years', imprisonment for assaulting a federal correctional officer and possessing contraband at the Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC) in Brooklyn, New York, to run consecutive to the terrorism sentence.</p> <p>Ali Saleh, 28, of Queens, pleaded guilty to attempting to provide material support to ISIS in July 2018. According to court documents, starting in 2013, Saleh swore an oath of allegiance to ISIS and embraced ISIS's directive to either travel to the Middle East or take action at home in support of ISIS. On Aug. 25, 2014, Saleh stated online, "I'm ready to die for the Caliphate, prison is nothing." On Aug. 28, 2014, Saleh stated online, "Lets be clear the Muslims in the khilafah [caliphate] need help, the one who is capable to go over and help the Muslims must go and help." That same day, Saleh made an airline reservation to travel from New York to Turkey, but was ultimately prevented from traveling because his parents took away his passport.</p> <p>"Saleh made numerous attempts to travel overseas to join ISIS, and when those efforts failed, attempted to assist others in joining the terrorist organization," said Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen for the Justice Department's National Security Division. "Once arrested and detained, he attacked a correctional officer with an improvised weapon. With the sentences handed down today, he is being held accountable for these crimes. The National Security Division is committed to identifying and holding accountable those who seek to provide material support to foreign terrorist organizations and we will be</p> |

unyielding in our efforts to bring to justice those who commit violence against the men and women in law enforcement and corrections. I want to thank the agents, analysts and prosecutors who are responsible for this case.”

“Today’s sentence demonstrates the strong commitment of this office and its law enforcement partners to rooting out and stopping their efforts to support terrorist attacks at home or abroad,” said U.S. Attorney Breon Peace for the Eastern District of New York. “Saleh is also held accountable for his vicious and premeditated attack on a federal correctional officer while in pre-trial detention.”

“Ali Saleh’s attempts to support ISIS, and his subsequent attack on a federal correctional officer, resulted in the penalties enforced upon him today,” said Assistant Director in Charge Michael J. Driscoll of the FBI’s New York Field Office. “The FBI’s JTTF in New York, along with our partners, continues to lead the way in preventing and intercepting threats posed by those like Saleh, who seek to harm our citizens at home and overseas.”

Saleh then redirected his efforts to facilitating others’ support of ISIS. In October 2014, Saleh communicated with an ISIS supporter in Mali through an online messaging platform and sent a \$500 wire transfer to fund that person’s travel to Syria. Around the same time, Saleh communicated with several others to facilitate their support of ISIS, including known ISIS supporters in the United Kingdom and Australia.

In July 2015, the defendant purchased fireworks containing explosive powder, hid them in a concealed compartment in the trunk of his car, and drove from Indiana towards New York City. The fireworks contained approximately 1,196 grams of low explosive powder, consisting of both pyrotechnic material and black powder. Law enforcement agents located a cellphone belonging to Saleh during the time frame when he acquired the explosive powder and discovered on the phone an electronic pamphlet titled, “Muslim Gangs: The Future of Muslims in the West (Ebook 1: How to Survive in the West).” The pamphlet provided detailed instructions on how to create a bomb using explosive powder from fireworks. The pamphlet provided an example of a soda can grenade, and the instructions specifically stated that the soda can should be filled with “[e]xplosive powder (i.e. from Fireworks).” Saleh posted online the pamphlet’s image of a soda can hand grenade with instructions on how to build an improvised explosive device. Saleh’s car broke down on the way to New York City and was abandoned by the defendant.

Subsequently, on July 24, 2015, the defendant made a reservation to travel from New York to Egypt, a country bordering Libya, and went to JFK International Airport. The defendant was ultimately denied boarding. The defendant subsequently visited three additional international airports in Newark, Philadelphia and Indianapolis, but continued to encounter travel restrictions. The defendant attempted to circumvent the apparent restrictions on his air travel by planning to take a train from Cleveland to Canada, where he intended to fly out to the Middle East. After law enforcement intervention, however, the defendant did not board the train and instead returned to New York.

After his encounters with law enforcement, Saleh changed his online social media moniker and expressed his support for ISIS under new usernames. On Aug. 24, 2015, Saleh stated online, “I am a terrorist.” On Sept. 1, 2015, Saleh stated online, “If they aren’t implementing shariah [Islamic law] grab ur gun and implement shariah and see how fast the world turns against u.”

In September 2015, Saleh was arrested at his home on charges of attempting to provide material support to ISIS. During a search of the home, agents recovered paper copies of an itinerary and Turkish visa issued in Saleh’s name for his September 2014 attempt to travel, and a duffel bag containing flashlights, headlamps and other survival gear. Agents also recovered a black trunk containing 29 machetes. Saleh was subsequently detained at the MDC.

During his detention at the MDC, Saleh assaulted numerous federal correctional officers and staff members, crafted weapons from materials in prison, broke cell windows and light fixtures, damaged property, initiated false emergency alarms, and set fires. In total, he was cited on more than 90 separate occasions for disciplinary infractions at the MDC.

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| | <p>On July 13, 2018, at approximately 12:35 p.m., while a senior correctional officer was retrieving trash through an access slot of Saleh's cell, Saleh reached through the slot and slashed the officer with an improvised knife, seriously lacerating the officer's right forearm. Saleh smiled at the officer and said, "I hope you die." The correctional officer subsequently underwent surgery for his wound. Saleh pleaded guilty to assaulting a federal correctional officer and possessing contraband in June 2019.</p> <p>Assistant U.S. Attorneys Saritha Komatireddy, Margaret E. Lee and Alexander F. Mindlin for the Eastern District of New York and Trial Attorney Katie Sweeten of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section are prosecuting the terrorism case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Douglas M. Pravda is prosecuting Saleh's assault and contraband case.</p> <p>The FBI's New York Field Office investigated the case.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Mastermind of 9/11 seeks secret testimony |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/17/us/politics/khalid-shaikh-mohammed.html?surface=most-popular&fellback=false&req_id=566494172&algo=combo_EI_bandit-all-surfaces-time-cutoff-20_setnthitem_0_news_typekoftopn_2_5_news_diversify&variant=3_EI_combo_bandit-all-surfaces_20s_guardrails_pool_hp_1d_no_opinion_diversified&pool=pool/249abdc7-aea7-4629-b2ef-a1f76cddbde&imp_id=192047425&action=click&module=Popular%20in%20The%20Times&pgtype=Homepage |
| GIST | <p>GUANTÁNAMO BAY, Cuba — A defense lawyer on Wednesday invoked the bedrock American right to confront one's accuser as he asked a military judge to permit the accused mastermind of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks to attend secret testimony by two psychologists who waterboarded him 183 times.</p> <p>The argument illustrates the on-again, off-again nature of the war crimes proceedings, whose rules generally exclude the defendants from classified testimony in the pretrial phase.</p> <p>The psychologists, both former C.I.A. contractors, began testifying in open court in January 2020. But their return to court to resume testifying has been on hold in part because the judge who heard it abruptly announced his retirement two months later, and in part because the pandemic paralyzed the proceedings for more than 500 days.</p> <p>The overarching issues are whether admissions that the defendant in this case, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, made years after the waterboarding were tainted by torture, and whether they can be used as key evidence in an eventual trial.</p> <p>The psychologists, James E. Mitchell and John Bruce Jessen, were called to describe their use of "enhanced interrogation techniques" — which included waterboarding, bashing a prisoner's head into a wall, extreme isolation, sleep deprivation and forced nudity — in a secret overseas C.I.A. prison network in 2002 and 2003 to "condition," as Dr. Mitchell testified, captives to answer questions on demand.</p> <p>Dr. Mitchell said that the defendants had gained their free will by the time they were questioned by FBI agents at Guantánamo Bay in 2007. The psychologist testified that even before Guantánamo, Dr. Mitchell and Mr. Mohammed would at times sit together and chat while holding hands, as Middle Eastern men sometimes do.</p> <p>Defense lawyers argue that the five defendants in the case were still so fearful that they could be tortured again that they told FBI interrogators at Guantánamo Bay what the C.I.A. conditioned them to say. They have asked the judge to exclude the interrogations as the product of systematic U.S. government abuse. In the short term, the question is whether Mr. Mohammed can watch when Dr. Mitchell returns to the court to testify in a closed national security session. No date for that session has been set.</p> |

Defense lawyers also argue that, because this is a death penalty case, the defendants are entitled to greater protections, including the right to attend secret testimony about which they might have knowledge. Prosecutors argue national security is at stake because the C.I.A. still retains certain secrets about its overseas black site program, which began in 2002 and ended in 2009.

The judge, Col. [Matthew N. McCall of the Air Force](#), inherited the question from his predecessor, Col. W. Shane Cohen, who [abruptly retired](#) after Dr. Mitchell testified in open court across nine days in January 2020, and Dr. Jessen for one.

A prosecutor, Maj. Jackson T. Hall of the Air Force, said a person must have a security clearance to attend a classified war court session, meaning both the public and the defendants are barred. He cited just one exception — an accused terrorist can hear the classified information if it is something that the accused terrorist said.

He added that previous military judges had excluded the defendants from classified pretrial hearings for the past seven years, and urged Colonel McCall not to deviate from that practice.

Major Hall accused defense lawyers of engaging in “graymail,” essentially arguing that, in order to achieve a fair trial, the government had to choose between disclosing state secrets or being sanctioned by the judge, possibly including a dismissal of the case.

Mr. Mohammed’s lawyer, Gary D. Sowards, said his team needed the defendant in court to hear secret evidence about the C.I.A. black site program — and the psychologists’ role in it — to guide their questioning of the men, based on Mr. Mohammed’s experience as a prisoner of what he called the “international gulag archipelago of torture chambers” from March 2003 to September 2006.

“Mr. Mohammed already knows about the grisly details of his torture and what happened to him,” Mr. Sowards said. “That’s what we’re talking about.”

Major Hall cited a similar exclusion in the federal proceedings from 2002 to 2006 against Zacarias Moussaoui, an admitted aspiring hijacker in the Sept. 11 attacks. During a period when he represented himself, the prosecutor said, Mr. Moussaoui was denied access to classified information that was favorable to his defense. In that example, he said, Mr. Moussaoui had a standby counsel who could see the classified information but not tell the defendant about it.

Mr. Sowards said the need for Mr. Mohammed to hear the testimony live was made clear after the defendant was excluded from the deposition of a former C.I.A. interpreter who lied about his background and ended up working for a defense team. The defendants in the case [recognized the interpreter at a court session](#) in 2015, and then exposed his prior clandestine status in open court.

Upon reviewing his testimony, Mr. Sowards said, Mr. Mohammed took issue with several of the interpreter’s statements but defense lawyers were unable to challenge him on the spot. Instead, Mr. Sowards said, defense lawyers were debating whether to seek to reopen the interpreter’s deposition to try to impeach him.

No date has been set for the actual start of the trial of Mr. Mohammed and four other men who are accused of conspiring in the 2001 attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people when terrorists piloted hijacked commercial planes and crashed them into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a Pennsylvania field.

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 UK: Liverpool bomber planned for months |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/17/world/europe/liverpool-hospital-explosion.html |
| GIST | LONDON — The man who set off an explosive device in a taxi outside a Liverpool hospital on Sunday had been buying components for the device for months and had a history of mental illness, the police said on Wednesday. |

The police have said they believe the man, who was the only person killed in the blast, was a 32-year-old named Emad Al Swealmeen. According to the police, he was originally from Iraq, but the authorities have said they are still trying to understand the motivation for the attack in the northern English city, which is being treated as an act of terrorism.

“A complex picture is emerging over the purchases of the component parts of the device,” Russ Jackson, the head of counterterrorist policing for northwestern England, said in a statement on Wednesday.

He said that as early as April, when Mr. Al Swealmeen had rented a property in Liverpool, he had made “relevant purchases.”

“Our enquiries have found that Al Swealmeen has had episodes of mental illness — this will form part of the investigation and will take some time to fully understand,” he added. He did not provide any details about the illness.

In the wake of the explosion in Liverpool, Britain’s national terrorism threat level was raised from “substantial” to “severe” on Monday, indicating that another attack was “highly likely.” The government said it had made the change in response to two attacks that it deemed to be terrorism within the past month.

In October, the Conservative lawmaker David Amess was stabbed to death while meeting with constituents in a church east of London.

Sunday’s blast unfolded shortly before 11 a.m. when the taxi carrying Mr. Al Swealmeen pulled up outside Liverpool Women’s Hospital. As the vehicle approached, an explosion went off inside it, engulfing the vehicle in flames.

The police said a post mortem examination had determined the cause of death to have been injuries sustained from the fire and explosion. The driver of the taxi, identified in local news reports as David Perry, escaped with minor injuries.

Security camera footage taken at the scene shows the taxi pulling up at the hospital entrance and then a blast that appears to blow out the vehicle’s windows. White smoke can be seen rising from the car as the driver leaps from the front seat.

Mr. Jackson said that the police had not found links to other individuals of concern in the Liverpool area but added, “This remains a fast moving investigation and as more becomes known we cannot rule out action against others.”

The police have appealed to anyone who knew Mr. Al Swealmeen to come forward to the police. But in the days since the explosion, small details have emerged from those who knew him during his years living in the city.

Mr. Al Swealmeen had lived with Malcolm Hitchcott, a retired high-ranking soldier, and his wife, Marion Hitchcott, for eight months beginning in 2017 after meeting at church. The pair said they were shocked by the news.

“There was never any suggestion of anything amiss like there has turned out to be,” Mr. Hitchcott told ITV News.

The pair said Mr. Al Swealmeen had converted to Christianity and was baptized in Liverpool. Mr. Hitchcott also said Mr. Al Swealmeen had changed his name to Enzo Almeni, after Enzo Ferrari, the founder of the Italian car company.

“He was a very quiet fellow,” Mr. Hitchcott said. “He didn’t express himself a lot, but what he did say was usually very deep and of a Christian nature.”

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| | Mrs. Hitchcott told ITV News: "What a waste of a life. But the one thing, I suppose, to be thankful for is that he did not kill anyone else." |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Iraq forces target ISIS militants |
| SOURCE | https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/17112021 |
| GIST | <p>ERBIL, Kurdistan Region - Iraqi forces on Wednesday launched another security operation north of Baghdad to clear out Islamic State (ISIS) remnants from a hotspot for the militant group.</p> <p>The Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF, or Hashd al-Shaabi in Arabic) pursued ISIS sleeper cells in a new operation in northeastern Diyala to the east of Hamrin Lake, state media reported as the security forces aim to search and secure the area from the terror group.</p> <p>ISIS seized control of swathes of Iraq in 2014. The group was declared territorially defeated in 2017 but it continues to carry out bombings, hit-and-run attacks, and abductions across several provinces.</p> <p>Two ISIS officials were arrested in Nineveh on Tuesday night, according to Security Media Cell.</p> <p>Diyala, which is an area disputed between Erbil and Baghdad, sees frequent security operations where militant cells are destroyed and ISIS members are arrested.</p> <p>On Sunday, Iraqi security forces concluded a two-day operation in the Hamrin mountain range where they destroyed 18 ISIS hideouts and seized rockets, equipment, and other explosives.</p> <p>The PMF also conducted a large security operation in the mountain range earlier this month, which came a week after ISIS killed 15 people and injured 17 others in a bloody attack on Diyala's Miqdadiyah.</p> <p>The incident was followed by another offensive on Kurdish forces in Kirkuk, another disputed area, where ISIS killed two members of the Peshmerga forces. The lack of coordination between Iraqi and Kurdish forces is blamed for leaving the troops vulnerable to attack.</p> <p>In July, the Peshmerga ministry said they were working with their Iraqi counterparts on the formation of two joint brigades to counter ISIS remnants in these disputed areas. The deputy Peshmerga minister had said the brigade will be formed after Iraq's October 10 election.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Wife of AQ hostage pleads w/captors |
| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/US/wife-al-qaida-hostage-us-effort-free-failed/story?id=81234268 |
| GIST | <p>The wife of an American held hostage by Islamist militants in Africa broke years of silence on Wednesday to criticize U.S. government efforts and to make a plea to the leader of an al-Qaida-affiliated group to release her husband.</p> <p>Els Woodke's husband, Jeffery Woodke, is a Christian humanitarian aid worker who was kidnapped in October 2016 in Niger, where he had worked for decades aiding nomadic peoples in the Sahel region. She has largely avoided public comments other than several pleas to the captor networks, as her family and U.S. officials worked quietly to bring him home -- but now she has decided to speak out.</p> <p>"That situation has changed, and I'm now asking for help from my brothers and sisters in Christ, from the public, and from the governments of Mali and the United States," said Woodke, a teacher's assistant in McKinleyville, California.</p> <p>Els Woodke appears in the new ABC News feature documentary "3212 UN-REDACTED" on Hulu to tell her husband's story and reflect on an ill-fated U.S. Special Forces mission in 2017, which a former commanding general of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) claimed publicly was tied to finding Woodke.</p> |

On Wednesday she said her family has grown deeply frustrated with the U.S. government's failure to secure her husband's release. Woodke's captivity has now spanned three U.S. administrations.

"I have been repeatedly threatened [by U.S. officials] that if I disclosed certain information that came from certain sources that I would no longer receive any information. I have also had so many restrictions imposed by the U.S. government that any meaningful attempt to raise a ransom is effectively prohibited," Els Woodke said in her prepared remarks.

U.S. officials have shared with Els Woodke details of her husband's captivity drawn from classified intelligence under condition of strict secrecy, sources involved in hostage recovery have told ABC News in the past.

Els Woodke disclosed that her family now has reason to believe from their own sources in Africa that her husband has been transferred from the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (IS-GS) to an al-Qaida affiliate in northwest Africa known as JNIM -- which would offer hope because the JNIM leader in the past has negotiated the release of Western hostages in the Sahel. In August, French forces killed [Adnan Abou Walid al-Sahrawi](#), the ISIS leader in northwest Africa, which Els Woodke said offers hope for a negotiation with JNIM.

"According to multiple sources of information, we believe that at some point prior to the death of Walid, Jeff was moved from the custody of ISIS-GS to the custody of JNIM," she said in her remarks. "The circumstances of that movement aren't understood yet."

Jeffery "was alive this summer," she said, adding that she was asking fellow Christians to help her raise funds for a ransom because foreign governments have shared that the captors want to be paid "millions."

Addressing her husband directly, she said, "Jeff, I hope you hear that we are working hard for your release. Do not lose hope. We love you. Stay strong. Stay strong."

Woodke also released a new video plea in French addressed to JNIM's leader, Sheik Iyad ag Ghali.

"I believe that you have kept Jeff safe and healthy and I thank you for that. I believe that you also desire that Jeff should be returned to his home and his work on behalf of the Tuareg and other nomadic people of the region," Els Woodke said in the video. "You are the only one with the power to make that happen. Releasing Jeff will require compassion and mercy, but these are the characteristics of a strong and courageous leader."

U.S. counterterrorism and hostage recovery officials have disagreed over intelligence about who kidnapped and held Woodke captive, pivoting more than a year ago toward a belief that JNIM had taken custody of the aid worker, officials have told ABC News. JNIM has held most of the Western hostages kidnapped in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger for motives that range from acquiring ransom to using them as political bargaining chips.

In Woodke's case, years went by without any communication or ransom demands by the captor network, sources involved in the case have told ABC News.

After a Green Beret team was ambushed leaving [four U.S. soldiers dead](#) in October 2017, then-AFRICOM commander Gen. Thomas Waldhauser made the startling claim that the team was attacked by ISIS near the village of Tongo Tongo after they had searched an empty ISIS campsite looking for intelligence on Woodke's whereabouts. The claim shocked officers in the chain of command and in hostage recovery, whistleblowers say in the new documentary.

"I think it's important to underscore why, then, was that mission undertaken? Why was it so important to send those people up there?" Waldhauser said at a Pentagon press conference in 2018. "We've had an American citizen by the name of Jeffery Woodke who has been captured and held hostage somewhere in

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| | <p>that area for the last year and a half, and there was a possibility that what they might find at that target would be a piece of the puzzle of the whole-of-government approach, to try to return an American who's been held hostage."</p> <p>"I had never heard that," former Assistant Secretary of Defense (Acting) for Special Operations Mark Mitchell said in the ABC News film, regarding the Woodke connection to the ill-fated missions of the American team. "So I'm not sure where that characterization came from."</p> <p>Intelligence, military, FBI, and Trump White House officials have told ABC News that despite Waldhauser's statements, the mission was never pegged to or driven by any efforts to find or recover Woodke and his name appears nowhere in AFRICOM's 268-page investigative report, Mitchell and others have told ABC News.</p> <p>Els Woodke and her two sons have wondered, however, if efforts to free her husband somehow led to the loss of the four American special operations soldiers.</p> <p>"If this [mission] was indeed on my husband's behalf, I would have to say, 'Thank you so very much.' Still, I am very sorry it happened," she said in the documentary. "It's a terrible burden to know that people [could] die in the attempt to rescue my husband ... I don't take that lightly."</p> |
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Suspicious, Unusual

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Fatal ODs spike Oregon, Washington |
| SOURCE | https://komonews.com/news-brief-newsletter/fatal-overdoses-spike-in-oregon-washington-as-us-death-toll-tops-100000-in-one-year |
| GIST | <p>PORTLAND, Ore. — Tragic new data shows the number of people dying from overdoses has hit a record high. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated more than 100,000 people were killed from April of last year to this year -- that's the most ever over a 12-month period.</p> <p>We are getting a better idea of how the Northwest plays into these 100,000 deadly overdoses. Oregon reported 940 overdose deaths in that time frame, which is a 45% increase from the same time period the year prior. Washington state reported more than 1,800 overdose deaths -- a nearly 36% increase from the same time period the year before.</p> <p>"This number represents lost opportunities for folks to engage and receive evidence-based treatments and potentially have better outcomes," said Dr. Andy Mendenhall, Chief Medical Officer of Central City Concern, when asked about the tragic milestone. "It's important to remember that people with substance use disorder do get better, and, unfortunately, the majority of folks that are passing away frequently disengaged from treatment resources that could potentially lead to a much better outcome."</p> <p>The CDC data shows there was one substance that played a big part in the problem. Many of the deaths involved fentanyl, which is a potent and deadly synthetic opioid that is often mixed in with other illegal drugs. Synthetic opioids, mostly fentanyl, caused about 64% of all deaths during the April 2020 - April 2021 time period.</p> <p>Kasey Anderson, who works for the Alano Club of Portland and is a recovering addict himself, says this is still a nation that doesn't want to look at the magnitude of this problem.</p> <p>"We're failing in raising awareness about the problem," said Anderson, the Director of Development for the Alano Club. "We're failing in widespread efforts to deliver supports and services to people who need them. We're failing in educating people about harm reduction measures. We're failing in making sure that people feel accepted by the recovery communities if they aren't completely abstinent."</p> |

Efforts are underway to provide more help. Oregonians overwhelmingly passed Measure 110 last November in order to get more funding to these clinics. The vote also decriminalized the possession of small amounts of some hard drugs.

Critics argue the vote took away a tool of punishment to curb drug use.

Supporters say we're ending a cycle of jail and drugs that led us to this point.

Recovery experts like Anderson said isolation and social distancing during the coronavirus pandemic ramped up this addiction crisis. He says it wasn't caused by the pandemic, it was an issue long before. But this addiction pandemic needs to be the next public health focus in order to break this deadly trend.

"As sad as this is, I think this will be the second pandemic in the wake of this pandemic," said Anderson. "It's going to be a behavioral health services pandemic. I think we are going to see the ripple effect from the last two years for several years to come."

When it comes to reversing the trend, other addiction recovery organizations talk about breaking the stigma, echoing the idea that addiction should be seen as a public health crisis and not a moral failing.

Tony Vezina, the Executive Director of the 4th Dimension Recovery, says the same systematic response that leaders had for the coronavirus pandemic needs to be applied to the substance use disorder pandemic.

"Every day on my phone, I get updates about cases, deaths, and presumptive cases. I don't have that same sort of update on my phone -- I can't go to any website and really see everything that's happening with the drug epidemic," said Vezina. "So, we need to have that same systemic response and urgency that we did with the COVID pandemic... or nothing is really going to change, or it's going to take a long time."

Vezina is also among those who are in recovery, he has been for more than nine years after an addiction to heroin. KATU News asked Vezina how he would encourage people to get clean after seeing such discouraging death statistics. He said there are people out there who will help, without judgment.

Vezina wants anyone who is struggling to reach out before it's too late.

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| HEADLINE | 11/18 CDC: frozen vials marked 'smallpox' found |
| SOURCE | https://www.cbsnews.com/news/frozen-vials-marked-smallpox-found-in-lab-freezer-in-pennsylvania-cdc-says/ |
| GIST | <p>Philadelphia — Federal health authorities on Wednesday confirmed the discovery of some frozen vials labeled "Smallpox" in a freezer at a facility in Pennsylvania that conducts vaccine research.</p> <p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the vials "were incidentally discovered by a laboratory worker" who was cleaning out the freezer.</p> <p>"CDC, its administration partners, and law enforcement are investigating the matter and the vials' contents appear intact," CDC spokesperson Belsie González said in an email.</p> <p>"The laboratory worker who discovered the vials was wearing gloves and a face mask," González wrote. "There is no indication that anyone has been exposed to the small number of frozen vials."</p> <p>Rutgers University chemistry and chemical biology professor Richard Ebright told The Philadelphia Inquirer, "For the general public there is no basis for being worried, even a small amount."</p> <p>The discovery raised concerns over inadequate security, not public safety, he added.</p> <p>The CDC would not confirm where in Pennsylvania the vials were found.</p> |

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| | <p>Smallpox is a deadly, infectious disease caused by the variola virus that plagued the world for centuries and killed nearly a third of the people it infected. Victims suffered scorching fever and body aches, and then spots and blisters that would leave survivors with pitted scars.</p> <p>The United States was able to end routine childhood vaccination against the disease by the early 1970s and said the last natural outbreak in the country occurred in 1949. In 1980, the World Health Assembly declared smallpox eradicated.</p> <p>There are two sites designated by the World Health Organization where stocks of variola virus are stored and used for research: the CDC facility in Atlanta and a center in Russia.</p> <p>Smallpox research in the United States focuses on the development of vaccines, drugs and diagnostic tests to protect people against smallpox in the event that it is used as an agent of bioterrorism, according to the CDC.</p> <p>In July 2014, officials said a government scientist cleaning out an old storage room at a Bethesda, Maryland, research center found six decades-old glass vials containing freeze-dried smallpox samples packed away and forgotten in a cardboard box. Officials called it the first discovery of unaccounted-for smallpox in the country.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Vote on napkin in Washington state? |
| SOURCE | https://mynorthwest.com/3241959/napkin-vote-washington-election-officials-say-its-safe/ |
| GIST | <p>A story from the Post Millennial surfaced this week, detailing a video where a King County Elections official described a scenario where a napkin indicating a voter's choice could be accepted in lieu of an official ballot. Washington Secretary of State Kim Wyman and a spokesperson for King County Elections (KCE) spoke to KIRO Radio's Dori Monson Show and MyNorthwest to explain why that is.</p> <p>Washington follows what are known as "voter intent" rules, meaning "that voters are not disenfranchised if they mark their ballot differently than directed," King County Elections spokesperson Halei Watkins told MyNorthwest.</p> <p>"If the voter's intent is clear, their vote can be counted," she clarified.</p> <p>In the case of the video circulated by the Post Millennial, the exchange regarding the napkin scenario was part of a Canvassing Board meeting streamed live by KCE last week. In it, a board member detailed how a voter could hypothetically take a napkin, write in the race and office they're voting for, mark their selection, and have that be officially counted, provided that it's returned in the signed envelope distributed by KCE.</p> <p>As Wyman notes, there are a series of built-in fail-safes to ensure the validity of that process once the envelope arrives at an election office.</p> <p>"Remember, at that point, they've already verified the signature for the voter against someone on file, they've already validated that that person hasn't voted more than once, and that they were eligible to participate in the election," she told KIRO Radio's Dori Monson Show. "By the time we get to the ballot, that voter is eligible to participate."</p> <p>There's an added layer of security as well, ensuring that no single election worker is ever alone during ballot tallying process, so that "you never that opportunity for a single person to be making those value judgments of 'oh, I don't like the way they voted.'"</p> <p>"Each of those steps along the process, we are accounting for every envelope we received against the computer tallies that we're doing on multiple levels," Wyman detailed, likening the process to how banks</p> |

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| | <p>account for their money on any given day. “There’s no single point where those things can happen where it wouldn’t be detected.”</p> <p>Instances where a vote arrives in the form of a napkin, a piece of paper, or anything other than an official ballot are described by Watkins as “pretty rare.” When they do occur, the decision on how to proceed falls to the local Canvassing Board, comprised of KCE Director Julie Wise, and representatives from both the King County Council and the County Prosecutor’s Office.</p> <p>“They review and make determinations on any cases where voter intent is not clear to staff under the guidelines in the (Secretary of State’s) Voter Intent Guide,” Watkins said. “We typically hold 1-2 Canvassing Board meetings each election prior to certification where the Board will review all outstanding materials or questions and then direct staff to process those based on their determination.”</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Monkeypox case identified in Maryland |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/17/us/monkeypox-case-maryland.html |
| GIST | <p>A case of monkeypox, a rare but potentially serious viral illness, was identified in a Maryland resident who had recently returned from Nigeria, making it the second case in the United States this year, health officials said. They said the risk that the virus would spread was low.</p> <p>The person was in isolation with mild symptoms but was not hospitalized, the Maryland Department of Health said in a statement on Tuesday. The agency did not identify the traveler.</p> <p>This is the second confirmed case of monkeypox in the United States within the past few months. The first infection was discovered in July in a Texas resident who had also returned from Nigeria, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said at the time.</p> <p>In a statement on Wednesday, the C.D.C. said it was working with an unidentified airline and with health officials to reach anyone who may have been in contact with the Maryland traveler. However, the agency said, fellow passengers had a low chance of having contracted the virus through respiratory droplets because they were required to wear masks to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.</p> <p>“No special precautions are recommended at this time for the general public,” the Maryland health authorities said in the statement, adding that they had identified and are following up with people who may have been in contact with the traveler.</p> <p>Monkeypox — so named because it was first identified in laboratory monkeys — occurs mostly in Central and Western Africa, although it caused an outbreak in the United States in 2003 after it spread from imported African rodents to pet prairie dogs, the C.D.C. said.</p> <p>During that outbreak, 47 confirmed and probable cases of monkeypox were identified in six states, the C.D.C. said. Those who were infected reported symptoms such as fever, headaches, muscle aches and rash. No deaths were reported.</p> <p>Monkeypox is in the same family of viruses as smallpox, but it causes milder symptoms, according to the C.D.C. The illness typically begins with flulike symptoms and swelling of the lymph nodes and develops into a widespread rash on the face and body. Most infections last two to four weeks.</p> <p>In this case, laboratory testing at the C.D.C. showed that the patient had been infected with a strain of monkeypox most commonly seen in parts of West Africa, including Nigeria. Infections with that strain are fatal in about 1 in 100 people, the C.D.C. said, although rates may be higher in people with weakened immune systems.</p> <p>The C.D.C. said it had been supporting Nigeria’s response to monkeypox since 2017, when the disease re-emerged in that country after a period of more than 40 years with no reported cases. Since that time, 218</p> |

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| | <p>cases have been identified in Nigeria and eight have been reported in international travelers from the country, including the ones in Texas and Maryland.</p> <p>There are no specific treatments available for monkeypox infections, according to the C.D.C., although one vaccine has been licensed in the United States to prevent monkeypox and smallpox.</p> <p>Monkeypox is commonly found in animals such as rats, mice and rabbits, but it can infect people who are bitten or scratched by an animal; who prepare wild game; or who come in contact with an infected animal or, possibly, animal products, the C.D.C. said.</p> <p>The virus can spread between people through bodily fluids, sores or items contaminated with bodily fluids, but it is generally transmitted through large respiratory droplets that do not travel more than a few feet. As such, prolonged face-to-face contact is generally necessary for the virus to spread, the C.D.C. said.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Florida grim record: 1,000 manatee deaths |
| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/florida-tops-1000-manatee-deaths-in-grim-single-year-record/ |
| GIST | <p>ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — More than 1,000 manatees have died in Florida so far this year, eclipsing a previous annual record as the threatened marine mammals struggle with starvation due to pollution in the water.</p> <p>The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission reported the updated total on Wednesday. The 1,003 manatee deaths so far in 2021 is many more than the 637 recorded last year and well above the previous mark of 830 set in 2013.</p> <p>Slow-moving, bulky manatees have long struggled to coexist with humans. Boat strikes account for some deaths and many injuries. But state officials and environmental groups say polluted water runoff from agriculture, sewage and other man-made development has caused algae blooms in estuaries, choking off the seagrass upon which manatees rely. Climate change is worsening the problem.</p> <p>Authorities expected another bad year for manatees, with more deaths to come as Florida enters the winter months when the animals congregate in warm-water areas where food supplies have dwindled. Seagrass beds on the state’s eastern coast have been hit especially hard.</p> <p>To compound the problem, manatees are slow to reproduce. According to the nonprofit Save the Manatee Club — co-founded by Florida troubadour Jimmy Buffet — one calf is born every two to five years after a manatee reaches sexual maturity at about age 5. Twin births are rare.</p> <p>“Manatees are in serious trouble,” ZooTampa at Lowry Park, one of four main manatee critical care centers in Florida, said in a statement Wednesday. “The loss of more than 1,000 manatees this year is deeply concerning and will have serious repercussions for years to come.”</p> <p>The commission is asking state lawmakers to approve \$7 million in the upcoming legislative session for seagrass restoration, manatee rehabilitation centers and other projects. Lawmakers approved \$8 million last year.</p> <p>Manatees were listed as an endangered species beginning in 1966, but their status was changed to threatened in 2017. A new push is on to restore the endangered label to bring more resources and attention to the problem.</p> <p>The wildlife commission estimates there are currently about 7,500 manatees, also known as sea cows, living in Florida waters. Viewing areas around winter warm-water spots are a big tourist attraction around the state.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Tattered dollars: street hustle in Zimbabwe |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/nov/17/dirty-dollars-how-tattered-us-notes-became-the-latest-street-hustle-in-zimbabwe |
| GIST | <p>In time-honoured street hawker tradition, Kaitano Kasani is using charm and persuasion to get people to sell him their tattered US banknotes.</p> <p>Kasani, 42, bellows through a megaphone as he walks through Glen Norah, a township in Harare, in the sweltering November heat.</p> <p>“Bring all your old and torn notes. I have a good rate today. There is no other better deal in town,” Kasani shouts.</p> <p>A woman brings a torn \$20 note (£15) which Kasani inspects before handing her \$15.</p> <p>In Zimbabwe’s beleaguered economy, buying and selling half-shredded banknotes has become the latest hustle.</p> <p>“Most of my clients are shocked that I actually buy such money. They love me for that,” says Kasani, showing a handful of filthy dollars which would be rejected in supermarkets or other businesses.</p> <p>Zimbabweans are suspicious of banks and prefer to keep their money under pillows and beds. In previous crises, hyperinflation wiped out millions in savings, particularly in 2008. Now, there is a lack of favoured banknotes as they wear out faster than replacements come into circulation.</p> <p>Shortages have led to the government telling banks and retailers not to reject old or worn US dollars, but many defy the order. A lack of exports means fewer new notes in circulation, and Zimbabweans are re-using increasingly grubby notes. Dealers either mend them or sell them on to others who will bribe or otherwise persuade senior bank officials to exchange large quantities.</p> <p>“These torn notes are more valuable to me than new ones. These old notes, when taken to the bank, will be replaced at the same value, yet we would have bought them at nearly half the original value, depending on how bad they are,” says Kasani.</p> <p>“All I need is the serial number and the necessary features for me to take.”</p> <p>Kasani sells old notes to business people and other cash dealers at 80% profit.</p> <p>His new business has sustained his four children after he lost his job in manufacturing two years ago.</p> <p>“This is quite lucrative; I actually got some assets through this business. I was one of the first people to buy such money in Banket [north-west of Harare] and other surrounding areas. It is just that the trade is now flooded, so I may have to concentrate on other things,” he says.</p> <p>The country decommissioned the Zimbabwean dollar after it was destabilised by protracted periods of hyperinflation. It was reintroduced in 2019 despite warnings from economists that the country did not have enough foreign reserves to sustain it. At that point transactions in US dollars were prohibited, but as cash shortages threatened business, the government backtracked to allow traders to accept the US currency again last year.</p> <p>Now, shortages of small US dollar denominations are leading to a boom in torn notes dealers.</p> <p>In central Harare, 36-year-old Munengami* keeps an eye out for plain-clothed police patrolling in a popular area for illegal trading. Dealers, some with babies strapped on their backs, endure constant run-ins with police, who have launched a campaign to remove illegal money changers.</p> |

A government [crackdown](#) blames traders for a plunge in the value of the Zimbabwean dollar. Money dealers say they are being scapegoated for the government's economic failures.

"They know that we are not the problem here. We do not have the power to raise the exchange rates. Government needs to deal with those businessmen who flood the streets with local currency, which automatically reduces the value of the dollar," says Munengami.

Zimbabwe's vice-president, Constantino Chiwenga, has warned of harsh measures against traders, with the government setting up an intelligence unit to fish out "saboteurs" and "fraudsters".

As the Zimbabwe dollar continues on a "[death spiral](#)", losing ground against the US dollar, economists have called on the government to make the US dollar the only unit of exchange. But the finance minister, Mthuli Ncube, ruled that out.

"We cannot adopt the US dollar alone as the official currency. You were there before and there were queues at banks, huge foreign currency deficits and you had deflation. That was because of the US dollar," he says. "It is not a good idea, and it will be suicidal to do so."

Economist Clemence Machadu says the crackdown on illegal dealing is futile.

"The government is firefighting, and that explains why we really haven't seen much of a change ... We should get down to brass tacks and deal with root causes, which are really rooted in supply, and not symptoms of the problem," says Machadu.

Inflation fell [from 840% in July last year to 50% in August](#) but has been sliding up again, to [54%](#) in October according to the Zimbabwe national statistics agency (Zimstat).

Carefully applying glue to a \$20 note, Munengami explains how he makes a living.

"I am a teacher by profession and the day I converted my salary to US dollars and got \$50 [£37], I knew there was no future for me in teaching," says Munengami.

"I buy torn notes to sell to my clients. It is more profitable than forex [foreign exchange] vending since I determine the price. I sell these notes to shops and businesspeople, at 20% profit."

A few yards from Munengami, Amina Banda, 34, does a deal with a man inside a parked SUV with her baby strapped on her back.

"I am always nervous that the police will arrest me, but this is how we operate on the streets. I do not trust anyone, so whenever a transaction happens, I always maintain a safe distance so I can escape. Sometimes, the police come in plain clothing disguising themselves," she says.

"I have a family to feed so I have to stick to the streets."

**Partial name used at the request of interviewee*

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Overdose deaths reach record numbers |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/17/health/drug-overdoses-covid.html |
| GIST | <p>Americans died of drug overdoses in record numbers as the pandemic spread across the country, federal researchers reported on Wednesday, the result of lost access to treatment, rising mental health problems and wider availability of dangerously potent new street drugs.</p> <p>In the 12-month period that ended in April, more than 100,000 Americans died of overdoses, up almost 30 percent from the 78,000 deaths in the prior year, according to provisional figures from the National Center</p> |

for Health Statistics. The figure marks the first time the number of overdose deaths in the United States has exceeded 100,000 a year, more than the toll of car accidents and guns combined. Overdose deaths have more than doubled since 2015.

Though recent figures through September suggest the rise in deaths may have slowed, the grim threshold nonetheless signals a public health crisis whose magnitude was both [obscured by the Covid pandemic and accelerated by it](#), experts said.

“These are numbers we have never seen before,” Dr. Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, said of the tally. The fatalities have wide repercussions, since most of them occur among people aged 25 to 55, in the prime of life, she added.

“They leave behind friends, family and children, if they have children, so there are a lot of downstream consequences,” Dr. Volkow said. “This is a major challenge to our society.”

The rise in deaths — the vast majority caused by synthetic opioids — was fueled by widespread use of fentanyl, a fast-acting drug that is 100 times as powerful as morphine. Increasingly fentanyl is added surreptitiously to other illegally manufactured drugs to enhance their potency.

Overdose deaths related to use of stimulants like methamphetamine, cocaine, and natural and semi-synthetic opioids, such as prescription pain medication, also increased during the 12-month period.

Fentanyl’s ubiquity and the unique social conditions caused by the pandemic have combined to create a perfect storm, experts said. While some drug users seek out fentanyl, Dr. Volkow said, others “may not have wanted to take it. But that is what is being sold, and the risk of overdose is very high.”

“Many people are dying without knowing what they are ingesting,” she added.

People struggling with addiction and those in recovery are prone to relapse. The initial pandemic lockdowns and subsequent fraying of social networks, along with the rise in mental health disorders like anxiety and depression, helped create a health maelstrom.

So, too, did the postponement of treatment for substance abuse disorders, as health care providers nationwide struggled to tend to huge numbers of coronavirus patients and postponed other services.

Dr. Joseph Lee, president and chief executive of the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, said that community and social support that was lost during the pandemic, along with the closing of schools, contributed to rising overdose deaths. “We’re seeing a lot of people who delayed getting help, and who seem to be more sick,” Dr. Lee said.

The vast majority of these deaths, about 70 percent, were among men between the ages of 25 and 54. And while the opioid crisis has been characterized as one primarily impacting white Americans, a growing number of Black Americans have been affected as well.

There were regional variations in the death counts, with the largest year-over-year increases — exceeding 50 percent — in California, Tennessee, Louisiana, Mississippi, West Virginia and Kentucky. Vermont’s toll was small, but increased by 85 percent during the reporting period.

Increases of about 40 percent or greater were seen in Washington State, Oregon, Nevada, Colorado, Minnesota, Alaska, Nebraska, Virginia and the Carolinas. Deaths actually dropped in New Hampshire, New Jersey and South Dakota.

“If we had talked a year ago, I would have told you, ‘Deaths are skyrocketing.’ But I would not have guessed it would get to this,” said Dr. Andrew Kolodny, medical director of the Opioid Policy Research Collaborative at Brandeis University’s Heller School for Social Policy and Management.

Most of those who died probably already suffered from addiction, or were in recovery and relapsed, an ever-present risk exacerbated during times of stress and isolation, Dr. Kolodny said. And many of those with an addiction to synthetic opioids very likely became addicted after being given prescription opioids by medical providers.

“Teenagers are routinely being given opioids to this day when their wisdom teeth come out,” he said.

President Biden’s American Rescue Plan Act includes \$1.5 billion for the prevention and treatment of substance use disorders, and \$30 million to fund local services for people struggling with addiction, including syringe exchange programs.

Federal funds can also be used now to buy rapid fentanyl test strips that people can use to check whether drugs have been laced with fentanyl.

But critics say the response has been inadequate given the magnitude of the public health emergency. They have called for new funding streams to provide universal access to treatment, and for treatment centers in every county that offer same-day access to substance abuse treatment.

For example, physicians still need federal permission to prescribe buprenorphine, a first-line treatment for opioid use disorder, which limits the number of providers.

“If you really want to see deaths comes down, you have to make it much easier for someone who is addicted to opioids to access treatment, particularly with buprenorphine,” Dr. Kolodny said.

“It has to be easier to get treatment than to buy a bag of dope.”

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Crime, Criminals

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Pierce Co. standoff ends; man surrenders |
| SOURCE | https://komonews.com/news/local/pierce-county-deputies-working-to-get-barricaded-home-break-in-suspect-to-surrender |
| GIST | <p>PUYALLUP, Wash. — The Pierce County Sheriff’s Office convinced a wanted man who broke into a home to surrender Wednesday evening, authorities said.</p> <p>A sheriff’s spokesman said the situation began around 1:30 p.m. at a home located in the 9200 block of 118th Street E. in the South Hill area.</p> <p>Investigators said the suspect, whose identity was not immediately released, allegedly broke into a home and put a note on the front door.</p> <p>When a woman returned to the home and was unable to enter, she saw the note and notified law enforcement officers who went to the residence.</p> <p>Investigators said the suspect is the same man who broke into another home in the same area while carrying a baseball bat and threatening assault. No one was injured in that incident, but a warrant was issued for the man.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/18 Kenya: escaped militants recaptured |
| SOURCE | https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/three-convicted-militants-recaptured-after-kenya-prison-break-2021-11-18/ |

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| GIST | <p>NAIROBI, Nov 18 (Reuters) - Three convicted militants, one of whom had taken part in a 2015 attack that killed 148 people, were recaptured on Thursday after they escaped from a maximum security prison in Nairobi, the directorate of criminal investigations said.</p> <p>The three men were arrested as they tried to make their way to Somalia and were now being brought back to the Kenyan capital, the Director of Criminal Investigations, George Kinoti, told Reuters.</p> <p>The escapees included Mohamed Ali Abikar, sentenced to 41 years for a 2015 attack on Garissa University in eastern Kenya that killed 148 people, mostly students.</p> <p>The two other escapees from Kamiti Maximum Security Prison were Joseph Juma Odhiambo, jailed for trying to join Somali militant Islamist group al Shabaab in 2019, and Musharaf Abdalla Akhulunga, arrested for his participation in a foiled 2012 attack on parliament.</p> <p>Police had described all three escapees as "dangerous" and offered a 60 million Kenyan shilling (\$535,240) reward for information that could lead to their recapture.</p> <p>The group raised suspicions when they sought directions to Boni Forest, close to the Somali border, the Daily Nation reported. The escapees looked dishevelled and one was limping, the Daily Nation said, quoting witnesses.</p> <p>On Wednesday, President Uhuru Kenyatta sacked the country's prisons boss Wycliffe Ogallo over the escape, Kenyatta's office said in a statement.</p> <p>Eight people who worked at the prison were arraigned on Tuesday over their role in the escape, according to a document from the Director of Public Prosecutions seen by Reuters.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Aurora CO \$15M settlement McClain death |
| SOURCE | https://www.cbsnews.com/news/elijah-mcclain-settlement-aurora-to-pay-family-15-million/ |
| GIST | <p>AURORA, Colo. — CBS Denver has learned the City of Aurora has agreed to pay \$15 million to the family of Elijah McClain to settle a federal civil rights lawsuit filed over McClain's death. The sum was confirmed to CBS Denver by three sources familiar with the tentative agreement.</p> <p>All requested anonymity as they were not authorized to speak about the settlement.</p> <p>City officials have acknowledged an agreement was reached, but said details would not be made public until the deal was finalized. McClain, 23, died in 2019 several days after a confrontation with Aurora police.</p> <p>Aurora police approached McClain on August 24, 2019 as he was walking home from a trip to a convenience store.</p> <p>A citizen had called police saying McClain "looked sketchy." When Aurora officers approached McClain, the verbal confrontation turned physical and a chokehold was applied. Paramedics injected McClain with ketamine, a powerful sedative, and he went into cardiac arrest. McClain was not armed.</p> <p>Days after the confrontation, McClain was taken off life support and died. A subsequent autopsy said his cause of death was "undetermined."</p> <p>His mother, Sheneen McClain, filed a federal lawsuit in 2020 against the City of Aurora and the police officers and fire department members involved in her son's death. Last month, her attorneys announced the case had been settled in principle resolving all claims in the federal civil rights case.</p> <p>They did not release financial details as Sheneen McClain and Elijah McClain's biological father, Lawayne Mosley, are still addressing how the settlement will be split. A court hearing is scheduled for this Friday.</p> |

The \$15 million settlement would surpass the \$12 million wrongful death settlement in the case of [Breonna Taylor](#) who was shot and killed by police in Louisville, Kentucky, in a botched drug raid.

While the McClain settlement falls short of the \$27 million the City of Minneapolis agreed to pay to the family of [George Floyd](#), it will easily be the largest in Aurora Police history, according to a review of past police civil case settlements.

From 2010 through 2019, a spreadsheet compiled by Aurora administrators and obtained by CBS Denver shows the city paid out \$7,397,814 for the entire 10 year period. There were no settlements of police cases listed for 2019 and 2020.

The largest previous wrongful death police case settlement in Aurora was \$2,600,000 for a 2015 death.

CBS Denver has learned that in 2019, when the McClain death occurred, Aurora carried an insurance policy with a cap of \$10 million. Multiple Aurora officials say in this case, the \$5 million difference between the insurance policy and the settlement amount will likely be drawn from Aurora's general fund.

That \$5 million draw likely won't have a large impact on Aurora residents since city sales taxes are up. For 2021, sales taxes are up 15.2% or \$24.1 million from 2020. For 2021, sales taxes are expected to total \$47.7 million more than was projected.

Qusair Mohamedbhai, an attorney representing Sheneen McClain, said he was not at liberty to comment on any terms of the settlement with Aurora.

Mari Newman, who represents Elijah McClain's father, said she could not comment on terms of the settlement.

A state grand jury has indicted the three Aurora police officers and two paramedics involved in McClain's death. Charges range from manslaughter to criminally negligent homicide.

Major police related settlements:

- George Floyd - City of Minneapolis paid \$27 million for Floyd's death
- Elijah McClain - Aurora, Colorado, agrees to pay \$15 million in pretrial settlement
- Breonna Taylor - Louisville, Kentucky, agrees to pay Taylor's family \$12 million and reform police practices following no-knock raid
- Laquan McDonald - Chicago paid the 17 year old's family \$5 million after he was shot and killed by police
- Freddie Gray - Baltimore settled with Gray's family for \$6.4 million in 2015 over Gray's in-custody death
- Philando Castile - St. Anthony, Minnesota, paid Castile's mother \$3 million and another \$800,000 to his girlfriend after an officer shot and killed Castile

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Mexico deploys national guard to resort |
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| SOURCE | https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/mexican-national-guard-be-stationed-tourist-resort-cancun-amid-violence-2021-11-17/ |
| GIST | <p>MEXICO CITY, Nov 17 (Reuters) - Mexico's National Guard will permanently deploy to tourist hot spot Cancun and the surrounding area following a rise in violence there linked to organized crime, the government said on Wednesday.</p> <p>At least 1,500 extra guardsmen will be sent to the state of Quintana Roo after recent security lapses made international headlines, including the deaths of two tourists in the resort of Tulum who were caught in gang crossfire.</p> |

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| | <p>That was followed by an incident earlier this month when panicked tourists were sent to hide in hotels after a gangland slaying on the beach near some Cancun resorts.</p> <p>"This cannot be repeated," President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador told a news conference during a visit to Cancun. "In a few more days, about 1,500 from the National Guard are to be mobilized to Quintana Roo."</p> <p>The new troops will be permanently based in the area, particularly in tourist zones, and will focus on intelligence work, Lopez Obrador said.</p> <p>On taking office in 2018, Lopez Obrador created the National Guard in a bid to overhaul the security forces which had battled criminal gangs for years.</p> <p>Violence linked to drug cartels is blamed for thousands of murders in Mexico every year. As of September, 21,495 people had died from gang-related violence this year, an average of almost 2,400 per month, according to the government.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 'The Base' member guilty plea: murder plot |
| SOURCE | https://www.ajc.com/news/hate-group-member-pleads-guilty-in-georgia-murder-plot/CJ4FCZSS2BDF5JMLGW2K7APX7A/ |
| GIST | <p>Michael John Helterbrand, a member of the neo-Nazi terror group The Base, was sentenced Wednesday to 20 years in prison for his role in a conspiracy to murder a Bartow County couple.</p> <p>Local police and the FBI arrested Helterbrand, 27, in January 2020 along with co-defendants Jacob Oliver Kaderli, 21, and Luke Austin Lane, 23, and charged them with plotting to murder the couple because they suspected them of being in a local antifascist activist group.</p> <p>The three men had been scheduled for trial later this month when Helterbrand changed course and decided to plead guilty Wednesday. Plea hearings for Lane and Kaderli are scheduled for Friday.</p> <p>At Helterbrand's sentencing, Assistant District Attorney Emily Johnson described how Helterbrand plotted to raid the couple's home and how he and his co-defendants would cover their tracks after killing them. Helterbrand bought "brass catchers" to carry spent ammunition cases, she said, and equipment to make a homemade silencer.</p> <p>He even said he would not hesitate to kill any children who might have been living in the house, Johnson told the court.</p> <p>"He said he was excited and he said, 'This is what I have been fantasizing about for two years,'" she said.</p> <p>The Base is a small but violent extremist group that seeks to use terroristic acts to bring about the downfall of society and establish a white ethno-state. The three men and other members of the local Base cell met and conducted paramilitary training in the summer and fall of 2019 at Lane's remote property in Silver Creek, a rural community near Rome, court records state.</p> <p>According to police affidavits and court testimony, it was during this training that Helterbrand, Lane and Kaderli began discussing plans to assassinate the couple, along with other activists and members of the news media.</p> <p>The prosecution's detailed understanding of the plot came from an undercover police officer who infiltrated the group as they plotted. The men were arrested before they could carry out the attack, although according to court records, they conducted surveillance and had made practice runs through the couple's quiet subdivision outside of Cartersville.</p> |

The intended target of the plot, appearing in court via teleconference, asked Judge John E. Niedrach to impose a tough sentence.

“This man has doubled down on a broken, hateful, disgusting worldview,” he said. “I’m asking the court to not go light on white supremacy anymore.”

Helterbrand, who also appeared in court via teleconference, shook his head and made inaudible remarks, pointing his finger at the camera before Niedrach restored order.

The judge described the plot as a “very shocking case.”

All three defendants have been held without bond since their arrest. While in jail, Helterbrand joined a prison gang known as the Ghostface Gangsters and was charged with taking part in a brutal assault on another prisoner. Helterbrand leaned toward the camera to show the large “Pale Face” tattoo on his forehead.

“That means he is more of an enforcer,” Johnson said of the tattoo.

Along with the charges associated with the murder plot, Helterbrand also pleaded guilty to the charges related to his crimes inside the jail. His plea deal includes a ban from Floyd and Bartow counties and a lifetime protective order against the Bartow couple.

The arrest of the Georgia Base cell made national news and came as authorities arrested members of The Base in Maryland who were plotting to open fire on a pro-gun rally at the Virginia Capitol in Richmond in an attempt to create chaos. A member of that Base cell, former Canadian Armed Forces Reservist Patrik Mathews, spent months hiding out on Lane’s property, having fled his home in Winnipeg after a local journalist published a story exposing him as a Base recruiter.

Mathews and a co-defendant [pleaded guilty](#) in federal court in Maryland last month, with each receiving nine-year sentences.

The arrests were damaging to The Base’s recruiting efforts, and last year the British newspaper The Guardian revealed the founder’s to be U.S.-born Rinaldo Nazzaro, who was living at the time in St. Petersburg, Russia. In recent months, The Base has stepped up its recruiting via the social media app Telegram.

In an email to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, a member of The Base described the Rome defendants as “persecuted political prisoners.”

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Seattle crime surge: people taking action |
| SOURCE | https://wcti12.com/news/nation-world/stand-your-ground-amid-violent-crime-surge-in-seattle-some-take-steps-to-defend-themself |
| GIST | <p>(KOMO) — Reports of violent crime this year in Seattle have already surpassed the historic high number that were reported in the city last year.</p> <p>It is perhaps not a coincidence then that more people are turning to ways to defend themselves and opting to stand their ground.</p> <p>From self-defense classes to skyrocketing gun sales, more people are looking for ways to defend themselves amid concerns that they are on their own when it comes to random street crime.</p> <p>Just a few weeks ago, Morgan Zion, who lives in Seattle, could be heard on cellphone video standing her ground from an attacker.</p> |

"I hate to be the person who says, 'Oh Seattle has gotten so much worse,'" she said. "But it has."

Morgan Zion talks about being attacked while out exercising in Seattle's Capitol Hill district.

Zion and her friend were running the Howe Street stairs in the Capitol Hill neighborhood when she says that run was interrupted by a man in crisis blocking their path who demanded drugs before he started punching.

"I ducked a little bit and then he punches me again," Zion said. "I just went into mother attack mode and just grabbed him by the shirt and I put him down near the stairs."

Zion eventually chased him out of the area, but she wasn't sure how much force she could legally use.

"I didn't know the right decision to make and the right move to make either," she said. "And that is the worst place for me to be in."

More people are worried that they are on their own when it comes to defending themselves against random crime especially since more than 300 officers from the Seattle Police Department have left the department.

According to police data, there were 4,439 incidents of violent crime last year, compared to 4,546 incidents of violent crime in Seattle this year with more than a month remaining in the year.

Some people are now trying to give themselves a fighting chance, enrolling in self defense classes to protect themselves.

"By the time they get there it's too late," said Caroline Ly, one of those who has started taking self-defense sessions as is one of the newest members of a Latosa Escrima, a self-defense class at Seattle Close Range Tactics. She said she was attacked years ago in Seattle, and she's sharpening her skills.

"This city isn't the same anymore," Ly said. "I think every woman in particular should absolutely take self-defense of some sort."

Cory Walken shows a self defense technique.

The class is designed to teach students to respond to sudden extreme violence.

Head instructor Cory Walken calls it self-defense for the streets.

"The goal is to survive," he said. "It's not (to) beat them up."

Walken has been involved in teaching self defense classes for 16 years, and has noticed more people taking his class, which he said could also be COVID related.

"I think there's an uptick in people taking their own personal responsibility to defend themselves," he said, adding that one of the biggest lessons is to be aware of one's surroundings, and if you can walk away then do it. "You go until the threat is neutralized enough that you can escape."

Turning to a firearm

Then there are those who want to take their protection to another level.

Tiffany Teasdale , owner of Lynnwood Gun and Ammunition, said since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic her shop has seen an 80 percent rise in first-time gun buyers coming in armed with questions.

"They are saying, 'I never thought in my wildest dreams I would ever buy a gun and here I am standing here buying a gun,'" she said. "We ask what made you change your mind and their like, 'I'm terrified to go

to work. I'm terrified to be home by myself. I'm terrified to go out to dinner with my girlfriend or my friends."

With more guns in hands, Teasdale's staff emphasizes safe handling and education first for her customers.

"With less officers on the streets, and longer response times so it makes people think, 'Well, maybe I should find a way to defend myself instead of waiting for somebody to defend me,'" Teasdale said.

Legal ramifications of standing your ground

But being prepared, may not keep some out of legal jeopardy.

"I have seen individuals make correct decisions," said William Kirk, a gun law attorney in Washington state. "And unfortunately I have seen individuals make incorrect decisions, and it cost them legally."

In Washington, people under attack do not have a duty to retreat if they are located where they have a legal right to be, according to Kirk.

He said, however, that the force that is used has to be proportional and reasonable.

"You don't get to bring a gun to a fist-fight," he said. "The amount of force that you use to defend yourself has to be proportional from the amount of force you are protecting yourself from."

Some in Seattle are taking steps to defend themselves amid a rise in crime and are using guns to do so.

When it comes to guns, Kirk said a person can only use deadly force while defending themselves when they are in imminent danger of death or serious bodily injury.

"While you have a Second Amendment right to protect yourself with a firearm, it is a right that comes with a huge level of responsibility," he said. "And a lawful and responsible gun owner is always going to go out and do all the proper all the training. So that they're not only proficient with the firearm itself from a physical standpoint, but they are also an educated firearm owner who makes responsible choices."

Zion said she has a better understanding of how to stand her ground.

"I'm hyper aware than I've even ever been before," she said.

Police and sheriff departments run required background checks on every person who purchases a firearm in their jurisdiction.

In King County:

- In King County from January to October 2020 there were 30,325 total firearm and CPL applications.
- In the same time period this year, there has been 30,418 applications.

In Seattle:

- Seattle Police Department said from January to October 2020 there were 14,147 firearm and CPL applications.
- In the same time period this year, there has been 10,598 applications.

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Seattle street robbery crew: 2 holdups |
| SOURCE | https://www.capitolhillseattle.com/2021/11/police-investigating-after-three-people-robbed-at-gunpoint-near-seattle-u/ |

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| GIST | <p>Seattle Police are searching for a street robbery crew after two overnight gunpoint hold-ups in the city including one targeting three people as they walked back to the Seattle University campus early Wednesday morning.</p> <p>Police say the group of three were robbed at gunpoint near 10th and Jefferson around 2 AM: <i>On 11-17-2021 at 0159 hours, officers responded to the area of 10 Av / E Jefferson St where they located 3 victims who reported they were walking back to Seattle U when a vehicle stopped, and 3 masked males exited the vehicle and started following the victims. One of the male suspects produced a silver revolver and the group robbed the 3 victims of their belongings. The suspects then entered their vehicle and fled southbound through an alley.</i></p> <p>SPD says the group appears to have also been responsible for a similar robbery only 40 minutes earlier in South Seattle. Police were searching for a vehicle believed to have been used in both robberies.</p> <p>There were no reported serious injuries in the robbery near Seattle U. SPD has not announced any arrests in the investigation.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Jailed: conspiracy to vandalize synagogues |
| SOURCE | https://www.hstoday.us/federal-pages/doj/new-jersey-man-sentenced-to-one-year-and-one-day-in-prison-for-conspiring-with-white-supremacists-to-vandalize-synagogues/ |
| GIST | <p>A New Jersey man was sentenced Tuesday to one year and one day in prison for his role in conspiring with members of a white supremacist hate group to threaten and intimidate African-Americans and Jewish Americans by vandalizing minority-owned properties throughout the country in September 2019.</p> <p>Richard Tobin, 20, of Brooklawn, New Jersey, previously pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Robert B. Kugler to an information charging him with conspiracy against rights. Judge Kugler imposed the sentence today in Camden federal court.</p> <p>“The defendant conspired with a white supremacist hate group to vandalize and destroy property owned by Jewish and Black Americans, intending to instill fear into those communities across the country,” said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke for the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division. “This sentence makes clear that targeting persons owning and using property simply based on their race or religion will not be tolerated. The Department of Justice will continue to prosecute civil rights conspiracies and vindicate the rights of victims of bias motivated crimes.”</p> <p>“Richard Tobin encouraged hateful acts of violence against individuals and their houses of worship, based on their religion or the color of their skin,” said Acting U.S. Attorney Rachael A. Honig of the District of New Jersey. “Justice demanded that he be held accountable for these racist and anti-Semitic actions, and we are proud to have joined with our colleagues in the Civil Rights Division and the Joint Terrorism Task Force in doing so in this case. Our commitment to protecting the civil rights of all in New Jersey is steadfast.”</p> <p>“Richard Tobin’s white supremacist beliefs are abhorrent, but his beliefs aren’t why he’s going to prison,” said Special Agent in Charge Jacqueline Maguire of the FBI’s Philadelphia Division. “He actively conspired with others to commit a crime of violence, to victimize innocent people because of who they are or how they worship. That’s what crossed a line and made it the FBI’s business. We’re always going to pursue individuals inciting violent, hateful acts meant to intimidate and isolate members of our community.”</p> <p>According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court, Tobin admitted that from Sept. 15 to Sept. 23, 2019, he was a member of a white supremacist group, “The Base,” and during that time, he communicated online with other members and directed them to destroy and vandalize properties affiliated with African Americans and Jewish Americans. Tobin dubbed this coordinated attack “Kristallnacht,” or “Night of Broken Glass,” after an attack in Germany on Nov. 9 and 10, 1938, in which Nazis murdered</p> |

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| | <p>Jewish people and burned and destroyed Jewish homes, synagogues, stores and schools. Tobin implored members of The Base to post propaganda flyers and to break windows and slash tires belonging to African Americans and Jewish Americans. On Sept. 21, 2019, members of The Base vandalized synagogues in Racine, Wisconsin, and Hancock, Michigan, by spray painting them with hate symbols.</p> <p>A conspirator, Yousef Omar Barasneh, previously pleaded guilty to conspiracy against rights in federal court in the Eastern District of Wisconsin, for his role in vandalizing the synagogue in Racine, Wisconsin.</p> <p>In addition to the prison term, Judge Kugler sentenced Tobin to three years of supervised release.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 ‘Taser Tuesday’ Georgia deputies charged |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/11/17/antonio-may-six-deputies-indicted-murder/ |
| GIST | <p>When Antonio May, 32, arrived at the Fulton County Jail in Atlanta in September 2018, guards there allegedly shouted that it was “Taser Tuesday.”</p> <p>Earlier that day, May was arrested for throwing rocks at a building and was placed in a general holding cell at the jail, despite him testing positive for amphetamines and being deemed suicidal by a medical technician, according to a lawsuit his family later filed.</p> <p>In the cell, May took off his clothes and exposed himself. In response, six deputies went into May’s cell, with one using a Taser on him without warning, according to the lawsuit. A confrontation ensued, after which all six deputies Tasered, beat and pepper-sprayed him, according to the lawsuit. Then, the deputies allegedly placed May in a restraining chair, covered his head in a “spit mask” — a mask used to protect police from bodily fluids — and tried to wash the pepper spray off him by placing a water hose to his face.</p> <p>Minutes later, May was dead, “laying in a pool of his own blood,” his family’s lawsuit states.</p> <p>Now, more than three years later, a grand jury has indicted those six deputies on five charges, including felony murder, aggravated assault, battery and violation of oath of office by a public officer. The officers named in the indictment are Arron Cook, Guito DeLa Cruz, Omar Jackson, Jason Roache, Kenesia Strowder and William Whitaker.</p> <p>“It is now the duty of my office to prove these charges beyond a reasonable doubt to a jury at trial,” Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis said in a statement to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. “My staff and I will continue to work to ensure that justice is done in this case.”</p> <p>The Fulton County Sheriff’s Office, which operates the jail, did not immediately respond to a request for comment early Wednesday. In court documents filed in response to the lawsuit, the county has denied wrongdoing. The civil case is ongoing.</p> <p>On Sept. 11, 2018, according to the lawsuit, May was on amphetamines and experiencing a mental health crisis when he showed up at the American Cancer Society in Atlanta and threw rocks at the windows.</p> <p>When police arrived, May surrendered peacefully and was taken to a hospital for an evaluation. It was determined that May was experiencing a “Substance Abuse Psychotic Disorder,” the lawsuit says. The hospital released him to the county jail, where May was again evaluated by an emergency medical technician, who noted that May was “suicidal,” according to the lawsuit.</p> <p>But instead of placing May in a medical observation unit and treating him for intoxication, May was put in a holding cell, according to court documents. There, May stripped naked. The six deputies showed up to confront May, and immediately, “without warning,” one of the deputies shot May in the chest with a Taser, according to court documents.</p> |

A “confrontation ensued,” according to the complaint. The six deputies then used a Taser on May “repeatedly,” according to court papers, with some of them placing their stun guns near May’s genitals and around his buttocks.

“The detention officers beat Mr. May with closed fist strikes and sprayed pepper spray in his face,” court documents state.

To remove the pepper spray, the officers placed May in a restraining chair, where on his head they placed the spit mask — used to protect police from bodily fluids — and put May in a showering area, according to the complaint. When the shower did not wash away all of the pepper spray, the officers used a water hose on his face.

Soon after, May died, according to the complaint.

Given his mental state, the lawsuit argues that May should have been placed in observation instead of a holding cell. A medical examiner’s investigation found that May died of cardiac arrest caused by “probable excited delirium with physical restraint use,” [the Appeal](#), a news outlet focused on criminal justice, reported.

For years, the district attorney’s investigation moved slowly. But on Tuesday, Willis’s office presented the results of its investigation to the Fulton County grand jury, which chose to indict the officers, Willis said in a statement [to WGCL](#).

Willis became Fulton County’s first Black female chief prosecutor earlier this year after her election last fall. She added in Tuesday’s statement that “my staff and I are working through the backlog of cases left by my predecessor involving use of force by law enforcement officers.”

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Exonerated: convicted killing Malcolm X |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/17/nyregion/malcolm-x-killing-exonerated.html |
| GIST | <p>Two of the men found guilty of the assassination of Malcolm X are expected to have their convictions thrown out on Thursday, the Manhattan district attorney and lawyers for the two men said, rewriting the official history of one of the most notorious murders of the civil rights era.</p> <p>For decades, historians have cast doubt on the case against the two men, Muhammad A. Aziz and Khalil Islam, who each spent more than 20 years in prison. Their exoneration represents a remarkable acknowledgment of grave errors made in a case of towering importance: the 1965 murder of one of America’s most influential Black leaders.</p> <p>“It’s long overdue,” said Bryan Stevenson a civil rights lawyer and the founder of the Equal Justice initiative. “This is one of the most prominent figures of the 20th century who commanded enormous attention and respect. And yet, our system failed.”</p> <p>A 22-month investigation conducted jointly by the Manhattan district attorney’s office and lawyers for the two men found that prosecutors and two of the nation’s premier law enforcement agencies — the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the New York Police Department — had withheld key evidence that, had it been turned over, would likely have led to the men’s acquittal.</p> <p>The two men, known at the time of the killing as Norman 3X Butler and Thomas 15X Johnson, spent decades in prison for the murder, which took place on Feb. 21, 1965, when three men opened fire inside the crowded Audubon Ballroom in Manhattan as Malcolm X was starting to speak.</p> <p>But the case against them was questionable from the outset, and in the decades since, historians and amateur investigators have raised doubts about the official story.</p> |

The review, which was undertaken as an explosive documentary about the assassination and a new biography renewed interest in the case, did not identify who prosecutors now believe really killed Malcolm X. Those who were previously implicated but never arrested are dead.

Nor did it uncover a police or government conspiracy to murder him. It also left unanswered questions about how and why the police and the federal government failed to prevent the assassination by at least one member of a New Jersey chapter of the Nation of Islam.

That man, [Mujahid Abdul Halim](#), was also found guilty, and his conviction stands. At the trial, he confessed to the murder, but said and has maintained that the other two men were innocent.

At his home in Brooklyn on Thursday, Mr. Halim, now 80, offered a simple response to the news about his co-defendants.

“God bless you, they’re exonerated,” he said in a quiet voice.

The acknowledgment by Cyrus R. Vance Jr., the Manhattan district attorney who is among the nation’s most prominent local prosecutors, recasts one of the most painful moments in modern American history.

And at a time when racism and discrimination in the criminal justice system are once again the focus of a national protest movement, it reveals a bitter truth: that two of the people convicted of killing Malcolm X — Black Muslim men hastily arrested and tried on shaky evidence — were themselves victims of the very discrimination and injustice that he denounced in language that has echoed across the decades.

In an interview, Mr. Vance apologized on behalf of law enforcement, which he said had failed the families of the two men. Those failures, he said, could not be remedied, “but what we can do is acknowledge the error, the severity of the error.”

Mr. Vance’s re-investigation, conducted with the Innocence Project and the office of David Shanies, a civil rights lawyer, contended with serious obstacles. Many of those involved in the murder case, including witnesses, investigators and trial lawyers as well as other potential suspects, died long ago. Key documents were lost to time and physical evidence, such as murder weapons, were no longer available to be tested.

“This points to the truth that law enforcement over history has often failed to live up to its responsibilities,” Mr. Vance said. “These men did not get the justice that they deserved.”

Still, the evidence available was significant.

A trove of F.B.I. documents included information that implicated other suspects and pointed away from Mr. Islam and Mr. Aziz. Prosecutors’ notes indicate they failed to disclose the presence of undercover officers in the ballroom at the time of the shooting. And Police Department files revealed that a reporter for The New York Daily News received a call the morning of the shooting indicating that Malcolm X would be murdered.

Investigators also interviewed a living witness, known only as J.M., who backed up Mr. Aziz’s alibi, further suggesting that he had not participated in the shooting but had been, as he said at the trial, at home nursing his wounded legs.

Altogether, the re-investigation found that had the new evidence been presented to a jury, it may well have led to acquittals. And Mr. Aziz, 83, who was released in 1985, and Mr. Islam, who was released in 1987 and died in 2009 at age 74, would not have been compelled to spend decades fighting to clear their names.

“This wasn’t a mere oversight,” said Deborah Francois, a lawyer for the men. “This was a product of extreme and gross official misconduct.”

The Assassination

The assassination unfolded on a bright February day, at the dawn of what was to be a new phase in Malcolm X's career as a civil-rights leader.

He had introduced himself to the American public six years earlier, a Nebraska-born street hustler turned minister speaking forcefully on behalf of the Nation of Islam, the Black nationalist group, about the way that white authorities abused their power and brutalized Black people.

Some of his ideas, espoused during his time in the Nation of Islam — he called white people devils and advocated racial separatism — were outside the mainstream even by today's standards. The news media, which was then almost wholly white, portrayed Malcolm X as a "[racist](#)" and a dangerous agitator and referred to the Nation as a "cult."

But he was also a person of intense fascination, a fiery and persuasive speaker who voiced ideas that many Americans had never heard before. And in 1965, a year after having left the Nation of Islam, he was beginning to define the mission of a new group, the Organization of Afro-American Unity — the subject of his planned speech at the Audubon Ballroom.

But shortly after he began to speak, he was attacked by three gunmen who rushed the stage, firing at him in front of his pregnant wife and three of his daughters and killing him. He was 39.

Mr. Halim, then known as Talmadge Hayer, among other names, was apprehended in the ballroom after being shot in the thigh. Mr. Aziz, then known as Norman 3X Butler, was arrested five days later, and Mr. Islam, known as Thomas 15X Johnson, another five days after that. Within a week, the three men, all members of the Nation of Islam, had been charged with murder.

At the trial in 1966, prosecutors cast Mr. Islam, who was once Malcolm X's driver, as the assassin who fired the fatal shotgun blast. Mr. Halim and Mr. Aziz were said to have followed close behind, firing their pistols. Ten eyewitnesses said they had seen Mr. Islam, Mr. Aziz or both.

But the witness statements were contradictory, and no physical evidence tied Mr. Aziz or Mr. Islam to the murder, or even the crime scene. Both men offered credible alibis, which were backed by testimony from their spouses, friends and others.

And when Mr. Halim took the stand for the second time during the trial and confessed, he insisted that his two co-defendants were innocent.

On March 11, 1966, all three defendants were found guilty and, a month later, sentenced to life in prison. Even then, evidence was already pointing to another theory of the case.

Mr. Stevenson, who has spent much of his career fighting against wrongful convictions, said the assassination of Malcolm X, followed three years later by that of Martin Luther King Jr., traumatized Black people in the 1960s, but finding the truth never seemed to be a priority for law enforcement and the government.

Wednesday's acknowledgment, he said, "just underlines how casually and recklessly these cases were investigated and ultimately concluded."

"It undermines already tenuous and fragile confidence in the rule of law to protect Black voices that were challenging bigotry and discrimination," said Mr. Stevenson. "And it also just represented our continuing problem with reliability and fairness, and those are the problems that we're still reckoning with today."

Reinvestigating the Case

Some of the evidence that appeared to exonerate Mr. Aziz and Mr. Islam emerged during their trial, but because key information was withheld by the authorities, its significance only became clear later.

One defense witness, Ernest Greene, testified that he had seen the man with the shotgun, and described him as dark-skinned, stocky and sporting a “deep” beard — a poor match for Mr. Islam, the man who was cast in the role by prosecutors, who was light-skinned, lean and clean-shaven.

But Mr. Greene’s description matched another man, one whose name jurors did not hear: William Bradley, a member of the same Nation of Islam mosque in Newark, N.J., as Mr. Halim. Mr. Bradley was an enforcer for the Nation of Islam, which Malcolm X had joined in 1952 and promoted unceasingly for a dozen years before an acrimonious break the year before the assassination.

He was less than six feet tall, weighed 182 pounds and was dark-skinned. He had been a machine-gunner in the Marine Corps and his criminal history included a charge of possessing an illegal weapon.

The description of Mr. Bradley was in F.B.I. files at the time, and Mr. Halim even identified him as one of the assassins. And the authorities were aware that the Nation of Islam was targeting Malcolm X; a week before the assassination, his house was firebombed while he slept inside with his wife and daughters.

But it would be years before the connection to Mr. Bradley became more clear, as a succession of amateur investigators — journalists, historians, biographers and others — took up the case.

One of the most important of these civilians was Abdur-Rahman Muhammad, who hosted a Netflix documentary series early last year, “Who Killed Malcolm X?,” that again assembled the case for the two men’s innocence — and others’ guilt. Upon [the release of the series](#), Mr. Vance announced that he would take up the case. The re-investigation was underway when a new biography was published, “The Dead Are Arising,” by Les and Tamara Payne, which identified Mr. Bradley as one of the assassins. That book [won a National Book Award last year and a Pulitzer Prize this year](#).

“I feel that I was able to get some semblance of justice for Brother Malcolm X and his family, first and foremost, and second of all, justice for these two men,” Mr. Muhammad said in an interview on Wednesday. “It means that my life mattered, that I contributed to the betterment of society and making our country a better and more equitable place.”

Phil Bertelsen, a co-executive producer of the series, said he hoped the exonerations would prompt Congress to seek answers to questions about the federal government’s role in the case.

“It brings us closer to understanding the mishandling of the prosecution, but the question still remains why those responsible were not investigated and prosecuted,” Ms. Payne said of the review.

Mr. Vance’s investigators, working with Mr. Islam and Mr. Aziz’s lawyers, examined the evidence that had long been laid out and pored over publicly, including the F.B.I. file on Mr. Bradley. (Mr. Bradley, who changed his name to Al-Mustafa Shabazz, died in 2018 and his lawyer denied that he had participated in the murder.)

The bureau’s files contained a report stating that officials in New York had not been told that Mr. Bradley was a suspect, as well as an informant’s secondhand account that Mr. Bradley was the shotgun assassin.

The panel also interviewed a new witness and reviewed reams of records: public statements, prosecutors’ files, court transcripts, and documents generated during the initial investigation, grand jury proceedings, the trial and post-conviction appeals.

One of the most significant weaknesses in the government’s case, the review found, was Mr. Halim’s confession and his assertion that his co-defendants were innocent.

Although all three defendants were members of the Nation of Islam, prosecutors failed to draw any connection between Mr. Halim, who attended the mosque in Newark and said his co-conspirators were from New Jersey, and Mr. Islam and Mr. Aziz, who attended the Nation’s mosque in Harlem. Several defense witnesses said Mr. Aziz and Mr. Islam were home at the time of the murder.

While most of the people the review panel sought to interview were dead, a witness who initially came forward at a screening of the documentary offered an account that seemed to confirm Mr. Aziz's alibi and had never been heard by the authorities.

The witness, identified as J.M., said he was handling the phone at the Nation's Harlem mosque on the day Malcolm X was killed when Mr. Aziz called and asked for the mosque's captain. They hung up while J.M. went to find the captain, and then J.M. called Mr. Aziz back on his home phone. Mr. Aziz answered.

Lives Shattered

Representatives for the two exonerated men said that the moment meant a lot to Mr. Aziz, and to Mr. Islam's family. But Mr. Shanies, one of the civil rights lawyers representing them, said their convictions had a "horrific, torturous and unconscionable" effect that cannot be undone.

The two men spent a combined 42 years in prison, with years in solitary confinement between them. They were held in some of New York's worst maximum security prisons in the 1970s, a decade that bore witness to the Attica uprisings.

Mr. Aziz had six children at the time he was convicted; Mr. Islam had three. Both men saw their marriages fall apart and spent the primes of their lives behind bars.

Even after their release, they were understood as Malcolm X's killers, affecting their ability to live openly in society.

"It affected them in every way you could possibly imagine, them and their families," Mr. Shanies said.

In the final episode of the documentary series, Mr. Muhammad, the host, asks Mr. Aziz to sign a petition asking the Manhattan district attorney to review his conviction. Mr. Aziz obliges, but says that the 20 years he spent in prison had erased his faith that his name would ever be cleared.

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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Man raped 4 as a teen; gets no jail time |
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| SOURCE | https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/11/17/newyork-christopher-belter-rape-probation/ |
| GIST | <p>A New York man who pleaded guilty to rape and sexual abuse for assaulting four teenage girls during parties at his parents' home will not face jail time after a judge on Tuesday sentenced him to eight years probation.</p> <p>Niagara County Court Judge Matthew J. Murphy III said he "agonized" over the case of 20-year-old Christopher Belter, who was accused of committing the crimes when he was 16 or 17. Belter pleaded guilty in 2019 to a series of felony charges that included third-degree rape and attempted first-degree sexual abuse, as well as two misdemeanor charges of second-degree sexual abuse.</p> <p>Although Belter faced a maximum sentence of eight years in prison, Murphy concluded that jail time for the man "would be inappropriate" in a ruling that shocked the courtroom.</p> <p>"I'm not ashamed to say that I actually prayed over what is the appropriate sentence in this case because there was great pain. There was great harm. There were multiple crimes committed in the case," Murphy said, according to WKBW. "It seems to me that a sentence that involves incarceration or partial incarceration isn't appropriate, so I am going to sentence you to probation."</p> <p>Belter, of Lewiston, N.Y., will have to register as a sex offender as part of his sentence. Murphy told Belter in court that the probation sentence would be "like a sword hanging over your head for the next eight years." The judge did not elaborate on why he did not impose jail time.</p> <p>Steven M. Cohen, an attorney for one of the victims, denounced the judge's sentencing, saying to reporters on Tuesday, "Justice was not done here." He told The Washington Post on Wednesday that his client, who was joined by some of the other victims in the courtroom, was "deeply disappointed" in the sentencing.</p> |

“My client threw up in the ladies room following the sentencing,” Cohen said. “If Chris Belter was not a White defendant from a rich and influential family, in my experience ... he would surely have been sentenced to prison.”

Barry N. Covert, Belter’s attorney, declined to comment. After the sentencing was handed down, the defense attorney told reporters that Belter regretted what he did as a teen.

“He is tremendously remorseful for what he has done,” Covert said, according to the Buffalo News. “There are clients who are never able to empathize with their victims no matter how much counseling they receive. Chris isn’t one of them.”

The crimes took place between February 2017 and August 2018 at Belter’s parents’ home in a wealthy neighborhood of Lewiston, a few miles outside Niagara Falls. During that time, three 16-year-old girls and a 15-year-old girl were assaulted in four separate incidents, according to the judge.

The “party house” label at Belter’s family home was fueled by his mother, Tricia Vacanti, now 50; his stepfather, Gary Sullo, 56; and Jessica M. Long, 42, a family friend, who allegedly supplied teen girls with alcohol and marijuana, according to state police. The three adults, who police say helped groom the women for sexual assaults by Belter, have pleaded not guilty in Lewiston Town Court to misdemeanor charges of child endangerment and unlawfully dealing with a child. None of them returned requests for comment on Wednesday.

“It’s not a party house case. It was a house of sexual assault,” Peter M. Wydysh, the assistant district attorney in Niagara County, said during the sentencing. “That is what happened there. That is not something we should look past.”

The fourth teen who was assaulted by Belter gave what Murphy described as a “gripping statement” of how she focused on a plant while she was being raped.

“During the rape, he told her to stop being such a baby. She focused her attention on the leaves of the plant as she cried during the attack,” Murphy wrote, according to the News. “The Defendant told her that, if she stopped resisting, it wouldn’t hurt as much.”

In 2018, Belter, then 17, was charged with first-degree rape, third-degree rape and sexual abuse for the assaults. As part of a plea deal, Belter pleaded guilty in 2019 to lesser felony charges of third-degree rape and attempted first-degree sexual abuse. The judge at the time, Sara Sheldon, placed Belter on two years interim probation and gave him the chance to apply for youthful offender status in his sentencing, which would have lessened the maximum prison time and allowed him to not register as a sex offender.

Sheldon, who has since retired, predicted Belter would struggle to comply with the restrictions placed on him in his initial probation — and she proved right. Belter acknowledged in court last month that he had violated his probation by installing software on his personal computer that allowed him to view pornography, which was restricted. Belter had told his probation officer that he had been watching porn since he was 7 years old, the News reported.

When Murphy denied him youthful offender status and ruled last month that Belter would be sentenced as an adult, the judge wrote that the 20-year-old had “recently been treated with medication to lessen his libido.”

“The assumption when Judge Murphy denied youthful offender status was that Chris Belter would receive prison time,” Cohen told The Post. “There were absolutely no consequences for the defendant’s repeated violations of Judge Sheldon’s terms of probation.”

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| | <p>Before the sentencing was announced, Belter addressed the courtroom that he had “come to feel deep shame and regret for my actions,” according to WKBW. He addressed the victims in attendance, saying, “None of you deserved to be in this situation.”</p> <p>“I hope each of you could close that wound I gashed,” he said. “I know though, that a scar will remain that will serve as a reminder of the evil of that night.”</p> <p>Belter is due back in court on Dec. 3 to determine what level of sex offender he will be classified as moving forward, Cohen said.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 ‘QAnon shaman’ sentenced 41mo. jail |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/legal-issues/jacob-chansley-qanon-shaman-sentence/2021/11/17/59d9ce26-47b1-11ec-95dc-5f2a96e00fa3_story.html |
| GIST | <p>Jacob Chansley, whose brightly painted face, tattooed torso and horned cap became a visual icon of the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol, was sentenced Wednesday to 41 months in prison by a federal judge in Washington. His lawyer had asked the judge to impose a sentence of time already served, basically the entire 10 months since the insurrection, during which Chansley attracted more attention for demanding an organic diet while in jail and giving an interview to “60 Minutes.”</p> <p>The sentence of roughly 3 ½ years is equal to the longest yet handed down to a Capitol rioter. Of the roughly 130 people who have pleaded guilty so far, only 16 have admitted to felonies, and Chansley is the fourth felon to be sentenced. The other three received terms of eight, 14 and last week a man who punched a Capitol police officer also received 41 months.</p> <p>Chansley, 34, was photographed parading shirtless through the halls of the Capitol with a six-foot spear, howling through a bullhorn and then sitting in the vice president’s chair in the Senate. He became known as the “QAnon Shaman” because of his appearances at gatherings of the “QAnon” conspiracy theorists and his Shamanic religious beliefs.</p> <p>Prosecutors quoted Chansley offering a prayer while sitting at the dais of the Senate, thanking God for “filling this chamber with patriots that love you. ... Thank you for allowing us to get rid of the communists, the globalists, and the traitors within our government.”</p> <p>Chansley’s “now-famous criminal acts made him the public face of the Capitol riot,” prosecutors wrote in a sentencing memo. With a suggested sentencing range of 41 to 51 months, the government asked for the maximum 51 months.</p> <p>Chansley’s lawyer, Albert S. Watkins, argued that his client had been sufficiently penalized by his 10 months in jail.</p> <p>“Mr. Chansley is in dire need of mental health treatment,” Watkins wrote in his sentencing memo. He said that a psychological evaluation earlier this year found that Chansley suffered from schizotypal personality disorder, anxiety and depression.</p> <p>Watkins asked U.S. District Judge Royce Lamberth to go below the sentencing guidelines range and release his client, due in part to Chansley’s “mental health infirmities of significance.”</p> <p>Chansley spoke to the judge for about 30 minutes, repeatedly invoking his spiritual guides of Jesus Christ and Mohandas Gandhi. “Gandhi would allow his loyalty to God and truth to guide him to accepting responsibility,” Chansley said. “I was wrong for entering the Capitol. I have no excuse. No excuse whatsoever. My behavior was indefensible.”</p> <p>Chansley’s lengthy comments, in which he praised Lamberth’s military service as a lawyer in the judge advocate corps, seemed to convince the judge that he had made significant changes. “I think your</p> |

remarks are the most remarkable that I've heard in 34 years" as a judge, Lamberth said. "I think you are genuine in your remorse. Parts of those remarks are akin to the kinds of things that Martin Luther King would have said."

But Lamberth said he could not reduce Chansley's sentence below the recommended guidelines because "What you did here was horrific," the judge said, "as you now concede. And obstructing the government as you did is the type of conduct that is so serious that I cannot justify a downward departure. I do think the minimum end of the guidelines is what you've earned because you've done everything right from the time that you started, and you've certainly done everything good today, convinced the court that you're a new person."

Chansley, who lives in Phoenix, had developed a following on various social media platforms in the months before Jan. 6, and posted messages such as, "We shall have no real hope to survive the enemies arrayed against us until we hang the traitors lurking among us," prosecutors said.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Kimberly L. Paschall noted that Chansley and Watkins had frequently claimed that his protests were peaceful. Reading from his social media posts, Paschall said: "That is not peaceful. It's a call to battle."

Chansley drove from Phoenix to Washington and was first spotted outside the Capitol at 1:50 p.m. on Jan. 6, according to court records. There was ample photo and video documentation of Chansley's movements, wearing a fur vest, carrying an American flag tied to a pole with a spear at the tip, and using a bullhorn. Paschall played some of it for Lamberth on Wednesday. Prosecutors said Chansley was among the first rioters inside the Capitol on Jan. 6. He also was the first one indicted.

Chansley used his bullhorn "to rile up the crowd and demand that lawmakers be brought out," prosecutors said. At 2:52 p.m., he entered the Senate gallery and began screaming obscenities, one of the videos showed.

He then gained access to the Senate floor, took the seat that Vice President Mike Pence had recently vacated, took pictures of himself and declared that Pence was a traitor. "It's only a matter of time. Justice is coming!" Chansley wrote on a paper on the dais, prosecutors said.

"What he wrote there," Lamberth said, "is a big problem."

Chansley was inside the Capitol for more than an hour, prosecutors said. He then drove back to Phoenix and gave an interview to NBC News in which he said, "The fact that we had a bunch of our traitors in office hunker down, put on their gas masks and retreat into their underground bunker, I consider that a win." When he learned that the FBI was looking for him, he called the bureau and told them he was glad he sat in Pence's chair, and called him "a child-trafficking traitor."

While in jail, Chansley spoke to "60 Minutes+" and told them he was allowed into the Capitol by the police, and that he was merely intending "to bring divinity, to bring God back into the Senate."

Chansley pleaded guilty in September to one count of obstruction of an official proceeding, namely the counting of the electoral votes in the presidential election. The charge has a maximum 20-year prison sentence, but Chansley had no prior criminal history and was not accused of committing any violence on Jan. 6.

In arguing for a 51-month sentence, Paschall wrote in her sentencing memo that "the peaceful transition of power in our nation was disrupted by a mob of thousands. ... And this defendant was, quite literally, their flag-bearer."

Paschall told the judge Wednesday that "deterrence weighed heavily in the government's recommendations here." She said prosecutors wanted to send the message, "Don't think the justice system will sit idly by while you attempt to interrupt the peaceful transfer of power."

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| | <p>Watkins argued that “general deterrence does not justify a sentence in excess of time served.”</p> <p>He cited cases in his memo in which judges imposed sentences below the recommended guidelines because of the defendant’s health conditions.</p> <p>He noted that while Chansley was on active duty in the Navy, a psychological evaluation was done in 2006 which diagnosed him with “mental health infirmities,” but that was never revealed to Chansley. On Jan. 6, his actions, appearance and Shamanic chants “were obvious indicia of mental health vulnerabilities,” Watkins wrote.</p> <p>“He made himself the image of the riot,” Lambert told Watkins on Wednesday.</p> <p>Watkins agreed.</p> <p>“Jake is a horrific image indeed,” Watkins said. “This assault on democracy was repugnant.” Lamberth also issued the other 41-month sentence in the Jan. 6 cases, to Scott Kevin Fairlamb for assault on a police officer.</p> <p>“You didn’t slug anybody,” the judge told Chansley, “but what you did here was actually obstruct the functioning of the whole government.”</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 In a fight, officer fatally shoots man |
| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/police-officer-fatally-shoots-man-in-north-bend-park/ |
| GIST | <p>A Snoqualmie/North Bend police officer shot and killed a 33-year-old man in North Bend’s Torguson Park around 11:15 p.m. Tuesday, officials said.</p> <p>According to initial reports, an officer was doing a check of the park and approached a group of people. The officer shot and killed someone after there was an altercation and “a person went for the officer’s weapon,” according to an initial statement on Twitter.</p> <p>Since the shooting, reports have differed on whether the people in the park were together or knew each other, said Meeghan Black, a spokesperson for the Bellevue police and King County’s Independent Force Investigations Team, which is investigating the incident.</p> <p>“We have gotten three different scenarios now as to what happened,” she said. “We believe that it was not a group of people and there may have been other people in the park.”</p> <p>In an update Wednesday afternoon, the investigation team said a fight “quickly broke out” between the officer and the man when the officer asked him to leave the park because it was closed.</p> <p>The officer, who was knocked to the ground, fired one shot, the investigation team said, when the man attempted to grab the officer’s weapon.</p> <p>The man’s family is being kept informed on details of the investigation, according to the news release. The officer sustained minor injuries.</p> <p>Communications and the investigation of the incident are being handled by King County’s Independent Force Investigation Team, which consists of 13 local law-enforcement agencies.</p> <p>The team was founded after Initiative 940 was passed by state voters in 2018, requiring independent investigations into the use of deadly force. The initiative took effect in January 2020, and the Independent Force Investigations Team was formed in the past year, Black said.</p> |

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| | <p>The team investigates only shootings by officers of member agencies that result in serious bodily harm or death. Not all law-enforcement agencies in the county are members of the team. This is the first time it has convened to investigate a shooting by an officer, Black said.</p> <p>Investigators on the King County team must undergo a “deconfliction protocol” to ensure they do not know the officer who discharged the weapon, she said.</p> <p>Following protocol, the officer who shot the man has been placed on administrative leave. The Kirkland Police Department is taking the lead on the investigation and will turn over its findings to the King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, Black said.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 Georgia: 5 ‘violent’ inmates recaptured |
| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/US/violent-escaped-georgia-inmates-tasers-remain-large/story?id=81177114 |
| GIST | <p>A search for five "violent" inmates who were at large days after escaping from a Georgia jail has ended, authorities said.</p> <p>The Warner Robins Police Department announced via Twitter that its officers along with a fugitive task force from the United States Marshals Service had captured the fifth and final escapee on Tuesday night.</p> <p>Tyree Montan Jackson, 27; Dennis Penix Jr., 28; Brandon Pooler, 24; Lewis Wendell Evans III, 22; and Tyree Williams Jr., 33, all fled the Pulaski County Jail in Hawkinsville, about 130 miles south of Atlanta, on the night of Nov. 12, according to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation.</p> <p>All five inmates have "violent criminal histories," including two who are charged with murder, the GBI said. They had two Tasers when they escaped and were seen traveling in a stolen white van, according to the GBI.</p> <p>One of the escapees, Jackson, was captured Sunday. A second inmate, Evans, was taken into custody late Sunday night in Warner Robins, about 100 miles south of Atlanta, the GBI said.</p> <p>As the search continued for the three other inmates, the U.S. Marshals Service offered a reward of up to \$5,000 for information leading to any arrests.</p> <p>While the last remaining escapee was taken into custody Tuesday night in Warner Robins, it was unclear where and when the other two were captured.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 11/17 DOJ: BOP failed to apply inmates’ credits |
| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/US/doj-finds-bureau-prisons-failed-apply-earned-time/story?id=81204260 |
| GIST | <p>Sixty-thousand inmates potentially did not properly receive credits for time served under the First Step Act's recidivism programs, the Department of Justice inspector general found.</p> <p>"We are concerned that the delay in applying earned time credits may negatively affect inmates who have earned a reduction in their sentence or an earlier placement in the community," Department of Justice Inspector General Michael Horowitz wrote in the report released Tuesday.</p> <p>The inspector general also found that the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) failed to incentivize or reward inmates who completed First Step-related programs.</p> <p>After the implementation of the sweeping First Step Act, a recidivism program was put into place with time-served credit for inmates who completed it.</p> <p>The BOP told the inspector general the credits weren't applied because they "must be negotiated with the national union because it would create changes to conditions of employment, including determinations and</p> |

application of earned time credits for inmates, for Unit Team staff working in BOP institutions who are bargaining unit employees," according to the report.

The DOJ report noted that a lack of in-person negotiations with BOP union members slowed the implementation of the act and inspector general recommendations. BOP union negotiations weren't taking place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, despite BOP staff going into federal prisons across the country.

The Bureau of Prisons union has not responded to ABC News' request for comment.

"BOP disagrees with OIG's characterization of the agency's delayed implementation of FSA requirements," the Bureau of Prisons wrote in a written response attached to the report. "Although the COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for the federal government, BOP has taken significant steps in implementing the FSA's requirements, consistent with the FSA's phased approach, and has complied with all mandatory statutory guidelines to-date."

On Tuesday, Senate Judiciary Chairman Dick Durbin called for Attorney General Merrick Garland to dismiss BOP Director Michael Carvajal after The Associated Press released a [report](#) detailing an amalgamation of federal charges against BOP employees.

"Director Carvajal was handpicked by former Attorney General Bill Barr and has overseen a series of mounting crises, including failing to protect BOP staff and inmates from the COVID-19 pandemic, failing to address chronic understaffing, failing to implement the landmark First Step Act and more," Durbin said. "It is past time for Attorney General Garland to replace Director Carvajal with a reform-minded director who is not a product of the BOP bureaucracy."

The Bureau of Prisons has been under scrutiny for more than half a decade for a multitude of issues.

Following the [suicide of Jeffery Epstein](#) at the Metropolitan Correctional Center, there were calls to revamp BOP totally, and former [Attorney General Barr brought in](#) former Director Kathleen Hawk Sawyer to run the agency. After she left, Carvajal took over.

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